



alpha continuum



S. LANDAU '76

alpha continuum

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

"Conspiratorials"-----	2
"No Time for Past Regrets", by Ingrid Cross-----	4
"Wings of Wonder", by Valerie McLean-----	21
"Caison Occurrence", by Signe Jesson-----	26
"Encounter", by Ingrid Cross-----	41
"Dancer", by Ingrid Cross-----	45
"The Sight of Kollos", by Leslie Fish-----	47
"Night Creatures", by Mandi Schultz-----	51
"Après un rêve", by Cheryl Rice-----	64
"The Fear of You, and the Dread", by Annelaurie Logan-----	65
"Never Enough Dark", by Cheryl Rice-----	79

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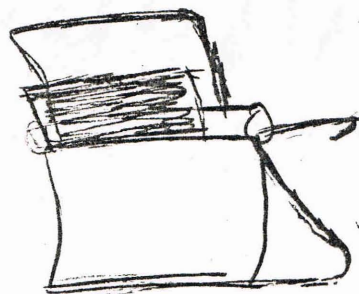
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Mother Rock -
by Thetis



"I HAVE NO HANDS
+ I MUST TYPE"

CONSPIRATORIALS

I have to admit it -- you do have to be crazy to edit a fanzine. If you're not insane when commencing the little (hah!) project, 'tis guaranteed you will be when you finish. I mean, I knew the job was dangerous when I took it; but nobody told me the degree of danger involved ah, well. It keeps you on your toes (and off your rocker).

I would like to apologize to Laurraine Tutihasi for the way her fine scratchboard illo turned out in print. It seems printers don't much like black--at least in that quantity! (He sort of moaned when I showed it to him.) We did the best we could I would also like to thank everyone who helped me scrabble this thing together--like the artists who came through with illos with very short notice, and the authors who put up with my editorial non-expertise; Art, the T-A who's a perfectionist, and Lori Chapek who gave "elemental" assistance; and especially typists Lorie Ott and Mary Keast, who did one helluva lot of work on this (and they're not even Trekkers).

Well, I'd best sign off and let you get on with your reading. The bus (Lame Duck Lines) leaves for Pike's Peak, Colorado very soon, and I must get ready. (Cog railway to the north face, right, Connie?) Here's hoping you enjoy our little (hah!) endeavor.

Marty Siegrist, conspirator-in-chief

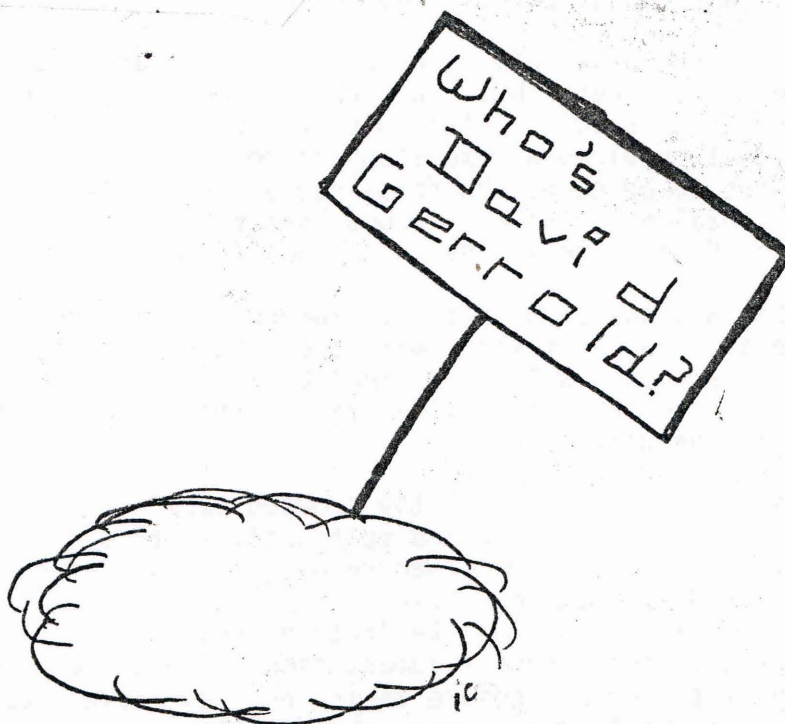
Don't ask me why, when or how I got involved in this thing -- it musta been a rock! As if I didn't have enough else to do

Enjoy, fellow fen. And please, be kind to our somewhat frantic efforts!

Signe Jesson, co-conspirator

There is an old saying that states that, given an infinite number of monkeys with typewriters, and an infinite amount of time, all the great works of the world will be reproduced. I would like to add a revision to that saying: Given three MSU students who are infinitely bored with school and who are a bit strange anyway, a fanzine will be born if they just happen to say "what if" just once too often.

Tina Henry, co-conspirator



NO TIME FOR PAST REGRETS

--Ingrid Cross

Lieutenant Commander Leonard McCoy, MD, was trying to get drunk. He knew from experience that intoxication dissolved fears and loneliness. But tonight, his last night on Earth, he was not getting drunk, but only more sober and lonelier.

He didn't enjoy drunken stupors, but he needed the alcohol's numbing for the pains and worries that plagued him frequently each day. Tonight, however, those problems refused to drown in the alcohol, and stared through his eyes and reflected themselves in his sixth Saurian brandy.

McCoy hunched his six foot frame closer to the bar counter. His long, surgeon-smooth fingers grasped the delicate snifter and he examined the red liquid critically. "If you-all had served this-heah watuh in Joajah, you-all would've been shot," he muttered thickly.

But no one heard him. In fact, no one heard much of anything in this bar. Which was why the doctor had chosen the place an hour ago. Situated on the edge of Star Fleet property, it provided an excellent hideout for officers who didn't want to be seen. Uniforms had a way of blending in with the local natives and various visitors and travelers from other Federation worlds.

McCoy was one such officer. Tomorrow he was due to leave on a five-year mission with the United Starship *Enterprise* as its new Chief Medical Officer. As much as he wanted to leave this planet, he wasn't certain this form of escape was the correct one.

The doctor's gaze swept the crowded tavern. Travelers from other planets were packed so tightly in this place it would hinder accurate tricorder readings, if any were somehow necessary. McCoy noticed three Tellerites in the center of the room, their pink, pig-like features engaged in their characteristic boisterous argumentation. The surgeon wondered dully at the drinks before them: he knew Tellerites did not get drunk, only more feisty than usual.

On the other side of the bar sat several Andorians, their profiles quiet and attentive. *I wonder*, thought McCoy,



whether they are observing these strange Earth customs, or if they are merely resting.

He turned his attention to the line of glasses standing before him. The nearly-empty one in his hand was addressed. *So many new worlds out there, so many aliens I'm not prepared to meet. And yet I want to leave, to get away from this place and all its hellish memories. Dammit! Can't I find a happy median?*

McCoy's eyes moved again, and rested on a young Terran girl with long brown, curly hair seated several stools to his left. A torrent of emotions flamed up as he watched her laugh and talk with the young man beside her. Aware of the ache, he slapped the counter and cursed aloud. "Damn it all!"

Heads turned in his direction and a flush swept across the well-lined features. He pretended intense preoccupation in the contents of the glass until the others lost interest in his movements.

The tirade of self-accusations continued silently. It's been seven months since you last saw Joanna, yet you still insist on searching for her face in crowds. Give it up, Len . . .

His tired inner voice fell silent. He missed his daughter Joanna a great deal, and sent weekly letters to her at the nursing school on the Moon. He worried about her constantly: she was all he had anymore.

The memories forced their way to the surface, taking him on a painful journey four years in the past. Arianna, his wife. A delicate, quiet woman who had been his support as he finished medical school with highest honors and gradually worked to the position of Chief Surgeon in Atlanta's largest hospital. His wife of 21 years, the mother of their only child. Arianna with her lavender eyes and short, curly black hair.

When the memories threatened to choke his throat, he roused himself and signalled for another brandy. He watched the swarthy barkeep lumber toward him.

"Yeah?"

"Another brandy, please." The bartender reached for the six glasses and McCoy's hand gripped the other's forearm.

"Leave 'em there. They aren't doin' any harm."

The man glanced at the stripes on the cuffs and decided to bring the drink. Officers! The whole bunch of them was strange. He resented this one's attitude, but then, credits

were credits.

The new glass fit easily into McCoy's hands, and he forced himself to let the memories return. He knew he could never have peace if he didn't face them.

Dee Williams. The name brought to mind a small, blond girl who had been the hospital's newest, most promising surgeon. McCoy had adopted her as his protegee, triggering Arianna's latent paranoia for rejection. His wife had seen the girl's beauty as a threatening force, while McCoy had never consciously noticed it. Medicine was his life, not women, and he was eager to help anyone who wanted the same life.

Then one morning he had found Dee's body in her office, and his wife sitting behind the desk, the bloody scalpel still in her hand. Just waiting...for him?

Arianna had been charged with the murder and subsequently institutionalized. McCoy realized he needed to leave the familiar environment, not to escape administrative retribution (indeed, his superiors had supported him throughout the trial), but to seek a place where he could work in relative anonymity. His nature compelled him to pay Arianna's medical bills, even though he hadn't been directed to do so by the divorce courts. Because he needed the money, he applied at the Star Fleet Academy. He knew they paid their surgeons well.

The girl he had seen earlier was leaving, and McCoy drank in the distant resemblance to Joanna. His eyes followed this couple's journey to the exit, and his mind wandered once more.

Explaining his decision to the hospital officials had been easy compared to his discussion with his daughter. *Two years, he mused. Has it been only two years since we argued through the night over such an obvious choice?*

"But, Dad! You know nothing about space. In fact, in all my years I have never heard you mention a desire to go off and well, explore the unknown. It's just not like you!"

"Isn't it, Jo? Can't you see that this is something I have to do? I need a different style of living, something far from the comfortable routine at the hospital. Besides, this place is full of memories, I love you, darling, and I still love your mother. But I just can't bear to be around this place anymore."

Her violet eyes nearly unnerved him. But he held to his decision, even when Joanna cried like the child she's been a scant number of years ago. McCoy knew she still didn't

understand *why* he was leaving, but he realized she wanted him to do what he felt was necessary. They had parted sadly, and each wrote long and loving letters weekly.

With nearly 20 years in medicine and a background of successful personal research, he found that the medical branch of Star Fleet eagerly welcomed him. Few questions were asked, and he buried himself in a pile of textbooks. He rarely associated with the other cadets who were nearly 22 years his junior, and finished the four year course in two. His first assignment was as Chief Medical Officer of the Enterprise, replacing Dr. Philip Boyce. He knew he could do the job well. It was only a matter of getting along with the other officers. He had already made a bad beginning with the first officer, that logical Vulcan, Mr. Spock.

McCoy shuddered as this recent memory assaulted his mind. At the crowded reception for newly-appointed Captain Kirk, McCoy had literally bumped into Spock. Hoping to find an ally in the noisy, impersonal crowd, the doctor had attempted to start a conversation.

"Mr. Spock. I'm Dr. Leonard McCoy. I've been assigned to the Enterprise as Chief Medical Officer."

The deep brown eyes had silently stared in the doctor's blue ones. No sign of recognition or pleasure had crossed the Vulcan's features. McCoy received the impression that he was being scrutinized, much like an archaeologist would carefully examine a new fossil. The thought wasn't comforting.

"Doctor," was the flat reply. "I have heard of your accomplishments."

McCoy warmed immediately and smiled. "Why, thank-you, Mr. Spock. "Mighty kind of you to say that."

The left eyebrow snaked its way upward to the edge of the black hair. The first officer's voice was cool and distant. "I did not intend to make a compliment, doctor. I merely state that I am aware of your skills. The Enterprise needs a competent doctor, and you were merely the logical choice."

McCoy remembered staring at the Vulcan with his mouth slightly open. By the time he realized that he was not presenting a suitable profile as an officer, the other had disappeared in the crowd. The blue dress tunic strode stiffly to the exit and was gone.

A great deal of questions had been raised at the time, and McCoy still didn't know the answers. He knew Vulcans didn't become involved with emotions--something from their

history had cancelled the natural state of healthy feelings--but McCoy was afraid this half-Vulcan, half-human officer was overcompensating.

The seventh brandy found its way home and McCoy sighed. *If that was the case, he thought, if Spock is trying to ignore his human heritage, these five years might become a bit irritating.*

The doctor sighed again and surveyed the dimly lit room. His attention was drawn to the figure in Star Fleet uniform silhouetted in the doorway. He hoped the captain--was it a captain? McCoy couldn't see the stripes in the gloom, but was almost certain it was--would not see him seated at the bar and try to establish a friendly conversation. McCoy felt no kindred spirit toward any Fleet officers and didn't care to try, either.

He had better things to worry about.

James T. Kirk was slightly intoxicated and wanted to stay sober. This was his last night on Earth, and tomorrow morning he assumed command of the USS *Enterprise*. He had just shared a depressing drink with Ruth Hamilton, a former girlfriend who worked in the commodore's office and despite his honorable intentions was glowing lightly.

He stood in the doorway of a tavern whose name he never saw, and surveyed the other patrons. He wasn't certain *why* he was here; he knew he would have to be crisply sober when he beamed aboard the ship at 0100 tomorrow. But he felt the need for companionship, and at this moment even an unfamiliar face would fill that need.

He was tired, deep-down-to-the-bone tired. He didn't fear tomorrow--in fact, he was rather excited about having command of that beautiful ship--yet he didn't want to leave Earth just yet. He had too many relationships dangling, too many people he wanted to see still. Ten days on this planet just weren't enough to finish up old business before proceeding to the new responsibilities waiting for him in space.

Kirk thought back over the past ten days. After arriving at Earth for his new orders, and receiving the announcement of one long-awaited captaincy, Kirk had been swept into a whirlwind of activities. Induction ceremonies. Conferences with top Fleet officials. A dozen or so parties. New faces and names to remember. *Why, I hardly know the men who will serve as fellow senior officers!*

Kirk regretted that he had not had the time to spend with his mother, sister-in-law and brother, or that he had

not seen the ship yet. Chris Pike, former captain of the Enterprise, had laughed when Kirk tried to express his frustration at regulations and ritualistic ceremonies.

"Jim," the sandy-haired man said. "That's something you'll gradually become accustomed to. From now on, that ship is your life. She'll demand most of your time, all of your affection and always come back for more."

It was then that Kirk felt the burden of his new role fall on his young shoulders. And for just a thought's time, he wondered if maybe he had been wrong; perhaps being a captain wasn't worth all the trouble.

But even now, when he was extremely worn out physically and mentally, even now he looked forward and saw only the rewards of being one of the 'best'. But, he thought ruefully, the halo of command can still be tarnished by insobriety.

Most of all, he craved an hour of quiet conversation with just anyone. Even his drink with Ruth had been too brief, and he had not said all he meant to. He knew he could not ask her to wait for him, and he certainly did not wish to marry her and leave her on Earth, hundreds of light years from his every mission. Already he was adjusting to the loneliness of Star Fleet command. He hoped Ruth would be able to avoid such loneliness, but he was not very optimistic about that. *Perhaps someday she'll understand, Kirk thought. Maybe she'll realize that my place is out there among the stars.*

He slowly pushed his way into the bar. He caught the sparkle of gold braid on blue cuffs and headed in that direction. Kirk focused on the narrow shoulders and dark brown hair, hoping he would make it to the officer before the floor rushed up to greet him. He accomplished his mission, and climbed gratefully onto the stool beside the officer. He turned to the older man and extended his hand with a friendly, albeit, weak, grin.

"Hello. I'm James T. Kirk."

The other man stared at him for a moment and gave his hand reluctantly. "Leonard McCoy".

The names and uniform stripes registered swiftly in both officers' minds. The next sentence was spoken in unison.

"You're from the *Enterprise*." Both men gave the words an inflection of surprise and cautious query. Each man wondered at the other's presence in such a dump.

"I saw you for a moment the other day during one of those dreadful parties," Kirk ventured.

The doctor didn't answer. He didn't know what the other man expected him to say.

Kirk tried again, this time gesturing to McCoy's empty glasses. "What are you drinking?"

McCoy favored him with a dour look. Clearly, he resented the intrusion. "Saurian brandy," he said gruffly. He glanced at the young man in a professional manner and noticed his slightly unfocused eyes and unmilitary slouch. McCoy was reminded of another version of himself from two years ago, and gently rephrased the last statement.

"Could I buy you a drink?"

Kirk shook his head to clear the ringing in his ears. "To be truthful, I've had too much already. Only one drink, yet I seem to be ready to fall asleep."

Again, the blue eyes searched the trim, under-six-foot frame with a judicious stare. McCoy sifted through months of withdrawn silence and reached for his rusty psychology.

"Worried?" he asked casually.

Kirk stirred. He wanted to tell this man what was bothering him, but he could not find the words to explain the overwhelming loneliness he felt in this new gold shirt, or the early homesickness he had not experienced even on his first assignment years ago. So he simply shrugged and hoped the doctor would not bother him again. He stared down at his hands, regretting his decision to enter the bar.

McCoy sensed the captain's withdrawal and hunted mentally for another approach. He knew parts of this youthful captain's records, and was aware that he had graduated at the top of his class. At 34, Kirk was the youngest Star Fleet captain. His honors and medals spoke highly of his experience, yet the doctor felt that the man beside him was enduring a great deal of pressure. *No wonder one drink affected him so quickly*, McCoy thought wryly. And, he noted, *Kirk is beginning to look sleepy and a bit green around the edges.*

He spoke softly. "Captain..."

"Call me Jim," the other replied. "No need for... formalities."

"Jim." The doctor pronounced the new name firmly. "You're not going to make a good impression on our Vulcan first officer tomorrow if you don't let me take care of that nausea tonight. Tell you what, you come home with me and I'll fix a genuine, southern cure for you. And tomorrow I'll give you my evil potion for after-effects."

For a moment, McCoy feared that Kirk would not take kindly to his suggestion, as he watched the captain shake his head. Obviously, this was a poor move, and McCoy smiled slightly as the patient swallowed with difficulty. He produced the necessary credits for the seven brandies and reached to Kirk.

"Come on, let me give you a hand."

Brown eyes looked into McCoy's softening blue ones. A look of relief flashed to the older man, and Kirk stumbled to his feet. Rejecting the offer of a hand, Kirk managed to move in the general direction of the door, while McCoy stayed as close as was possible. The crowd eased the two through the exit and out into the dark street.

McCoy grabbed Kirk's arm and steered him to the left. The contact with warm flesh was a comforting force as the lonely man walked slowly down the foggy street, leading his lonely partner in gold toward a distant light.

Perhaps I've made the right decision after all, McCoy thought. Maybe my place is among the stars...out there where others need me.

Sukyo Samura was in Star Fleet because of the thirst for adventure and the prospect of material for a novel. Yet he could not seem to find the fulfillment of that thirst in his present duties as Transporter Technician. In the quiet Transporter Room, he found only boredom reflected back to him from the blank white walls. Sometimes he could find the necessary concentration for molding his novel mentally, but at other times, he itched to be done with his five-year stint. All he wanted to do was have the peace to write; but unfortunately, writing alone wasn't enough to support him throughout his life. And there was Kim, also, waiting for him when he completed this mission. He couldn't expect her to live in a state of near-poverty while he tried to fulfill a dream.

The small, oriental ensign fingered the panel before him, tracing the raised surface of dials and levers with a short, stubby finger. He refrained from fidgeting, and shifted his feet into a more comfortable position. The first officer was due any minute and Sukyo didn't want to be discovered in an undignified position.

It wasn't that he relished being in situations of danger like those encountered by landing parties, but he didn't want to be stuck in the bowels of the Enterprise for another three years.

The doors whooshed open and Mr. Spock strode in. Sukyo stiffened self-consciously and as the first officer stepped before him, the ensign hoped the Vulcan had not seen his nervous jump.

"Mr. Sumura. You have received the coordinates of Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy's departure point." It was a statement, not a question.

"Yes, sir. Star Base reports that they will be ready for beam-up in approximately five minutes."

The Vulcan moved away and paced a few steps toward the transporter platform. Sukyo could feel the total withdrawal on Spock's part. He watched his superior officer surreptitiously, and his glance rested on the delicate, upswept ears. Sukyo knew those ears had created a barrier of loneliness for Spock. Most crewmembers could not understand why Spock's human-Vulcan personality denied him a friendship with anyone on board. *I don't know why, either,* Sukyo reminded himself. *But I can certainly understand the loneliness he is going through.*

Sukyo greatly admired the first officer, and was glad Spock had recently received the promotion from his former post as science officer. After establishing orbit around Earth nine days earlier, Star Fleet headquarters had relayed a long list of promotions and transfers. Sukyo had heard how the news was received on the bridge from Chief Engineer Scott.

"Ah, lad. Sometimes I wonder if maybe we officers aren't a wee bit restrained. No one ever laughs up there on the bridge or jokes. And even when we got the orders, in the face of such great occurrences." The engineer's craggy face lit when he spoke, and those who had been stuck in any part of the ship other than the bridge could relive those moments. Scott's voice was wistful when he spoke again.

"I just hope this new captain isn't so set in his ways that he's forgotten how to laugh when he feels like it."

Sukyo wasn't certain he agreed. Captain Pike was a gentle man, not solemn; it was simply that he didn't allow anyone to see the man underneath the layer of captaincy. Sukyo wondered how Spock felt about serving under a new captain. *Perhaps he regards it as his duty,* the ensign thought. *Maybe he doesn't care at all, as long as Captain Kirk learns to avoid engaging Spock in any frivolous human conversation.*

The object of Sukyo's initial attention turned and Sukyo realized the five minutes had elapsed. He slid the two black levers on his left upward along the panel's surface

and a high-pitched whine began. Sukyo winced as the customary screech grated on his nerves. Two columns of sparkling silver slowly appeared on two separate discs, and the transporter reassembled confused molecules into Star Fleet uniformed figures.

With a shock Sukyo realized the man in the gold shirt with two stripes on the cuffs was young. Sukyo had heard of his accomplishments, but he had not expected a commanding officer of 34!

James T. Kirk quickly adjusted to his surroundings and stepped out of the transporter chamber. The middle-aged doctor, dressed in the blue uniform of Star Fleet Sciences--Sukyo fumbled mentally for his name--shook his head slightly to chase away the customary vertigo and moved wobbily behind Kirk. Sukyo wondered briefly at--Leonard McCoy! that was it--McCoy's obvious unfamiliarity with the transporter. *Everyone who attends the Academy should be accustomed to the dizziness, Sukyo thought. Why does McCoy wobble like that?* He stored this puzzlement for later consideration.

McCoy was also berating himself for his lack of knowledge. *Blasted transporter, he raged inwardly. I've been on one of these things a dozen times and I still feel like scrambled eggs when I reappear. And it doesn't improve the situation greatly when I'm feeling the after-effects of Saurian brandy. I had better remember that I'm a doctor, not a lush.* He shook his head once more and clenched his teeth against the nausea. *Kirk looks fairly stable. And no wonder! He was in the gym this morning, working off the light-headedness. I wonder if I look as old as I feel?*

Kirk, however, did not feel quite as healthy as he appeared to be. *Good lord, he thought. Even that workout this morning doesn't seem to have cleared my head. Careful, Jim, he chided himself. Keep up the calm manner.* He watched his first officer and wondered if he was at all nervous inside. *Do Vulcans worry?* the Captain thought. *Or is that illogical, also?*

Spock stood stiffly and watched the two new officers. *For thirteen years I have served under Captain Pike and I have yet to understand humans. Why must they always face new surroundings while partially inebriated, as the doctor quite obviously is?* He sighed inwardly and wondered if this problem of non-comprehension could be measured statistically. *I believe, the chances are practically non-existent, since my efforts for 13 years have proven to be fruitless.*

Sukyo watched the first officer and the captain, waiting for a first move. In moments, it was clear that Mr. Spock would be the initiator of conversation.

The Vulcan stood quite still and raised his right hand in a peculiar salute--palm facing the captain, the third and fourth fingers splayed, the thumb at a right angle to the hand. McCoy's left eyebrow shot heavenward as Spock spoke.

"Captain Kirk. Peace. Live long and prosper."

Sukyo held his breath. This was the first time he had seen the Vulcan display any of his race's ancient traditions, and he thought it was a dignified and beautiful manner of greeting. The ensign knew it was Kirk's first exposure, also, when he saw the momentary widening of liquid brown eyes. The air snapped with electric tension.

The tension broke and Kirk, imperturbable once more, inclined his head slightly, and spoke for the first time. His words were warm, deliberate and hinted of Iowa cornfields and sunny afternoons. "Thank-you, Mr. Spock. It is a pleasure to meet you." He stepped off the platform and smiled.

Spock remained silent, and McCoy began to seethe. *Damn Vulcan! Can't he even unbend enough to make Jim more comfortable? What does it take to draw him out of that shell?*

Kirk noticed the silence and his smile slowly faded. He hated these instances and tried to avoid them at parties or ceremonies. But here they could not be avoidable; he must keep good will and harmony at the forefront. He was aware of McCoy's movements behind him and seized at the opportunity for speaking.

"Lieutenant Commander Spock, Dr. Leonard McCoy."

Spock studies the doctor before answering. "We have met, Captain." His voice was as cool as when he ordered his meals from the synthesizers.

McCoy misinterpreted Spock's awkward aloofness as hostility, which caused his own unsteady emotions to shift ominously. When he spoke, his words were tinged with ice. "Yes, Captain. We met several days ago."

Kirk found himself caught in the middle of a nonverbal war which he had no way of understanding. His mouth was open in a most unflattering manner and he snapped it shut quickly. *Oh, God!* he thought. *What happened and why?*

The moment of silence stretched. Spock was watching McCoy again, his head tilted to one side slightly. McCoy was flustered, and Kirk looked exasperated. Sukyo made an awkward movement and the men turned to him for a moment. He stiffened to a posture Star Fleet physicians would have ruled dangerous, and prayed for a miraculous disappearance.

Well, Kirk thought. *The only solution seems to be to separate the two officers until they become accustomed to each other.* He spoke, his voice gentle. "Doctor, it's been a rough day. Maybe you'd like to get settled in your cabin and check out Sickbay. We leave Earth's orbit in two hours. Perhaps you'd like to be on the bridge when we do leave..."

Don't patronize me! McCoy was tempted to blurt. *Let me get at him for just a minute. Then we'll see how quickly that Vulcan opens his mouth!* McCoy fancied that he saw a plea in the brown eyes and surrendered to the suggestion. *Oh, well. At least I'll get out of here and be able to see the Sickbay. That's where I'll be hiding most of the time anyway.* When he spoke, his voice had slipped south of the Mason-Dixon line. "Right, Captain. I'll...ah...yes. Later."

His voice faded as the doors swished open and shut behind his slim figure. Sukyo wondered idly if the doctor knew which corridor led to the turbo lift.

Spock turned from his survey of the door and looked directly at Kirk. "Captain, you may be interested to know that Gary Mitchell is waiting to see you in your quarters."

"Gary Mitchell?" The captain was clearly disoriented by the abrupt transition in the conversation. Then he remembered the name. Sukyo knew that Mitchell had been a close friend of this man since the Academy.

Spock moved for the first time and started toward the door. "If you wish, I will accompany you to Deck 5 where--"

Kirk's hands fluttered weakly. "No, thank you. I can find my quarters easily. I'll meet you on the bridge shortly."

Spock hesitated, and Sukyo hoped he would agree to the change in plans. Kirk seems rather flustered now, and the ensign wished Spock could understand that humans could not adapt to Vulcans very quickly. Spock took both the mental and vocal hints and left. The captain stared thoughtfully at the door and sighed. Then he turned to Sukyo and straightened his shoulders. "I never caught your name, ensign," he said gently.

Sukyo swallowed with difficulty. The miracle had not come through. "Ensign Sukyo Samura, sir."

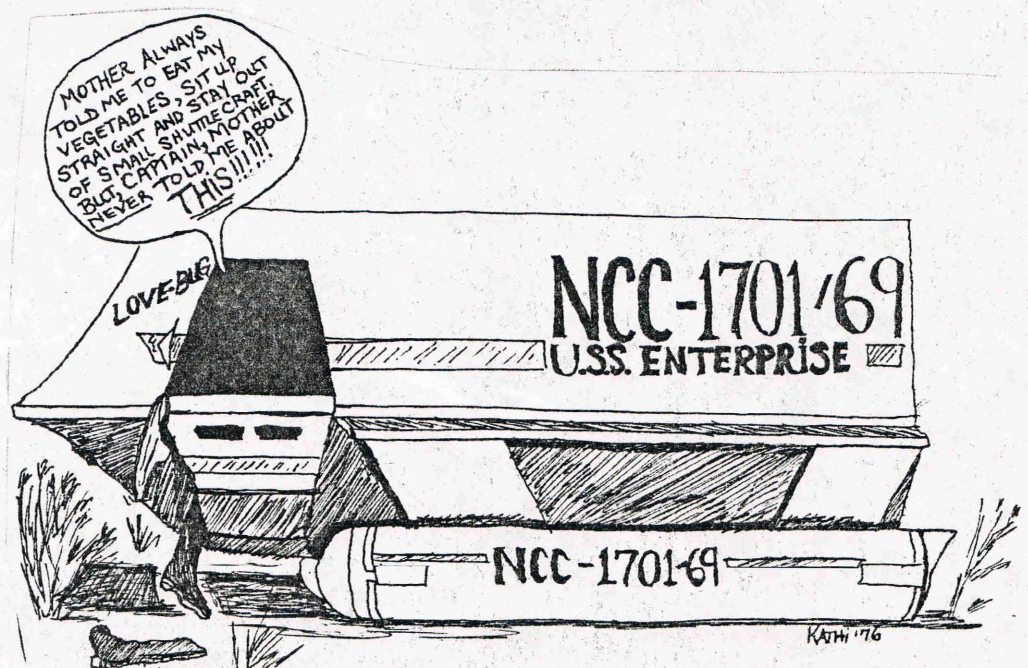
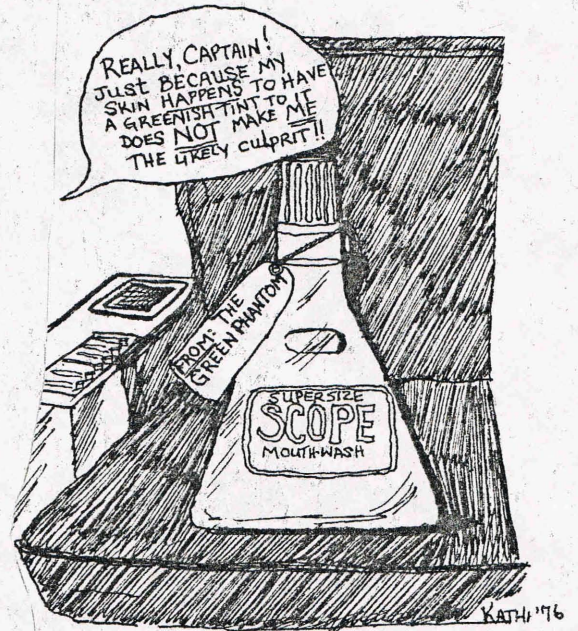
Kirk smiled again. Samura noticed the row of even, white teeth and suddenly wondered how women reacted to his charisma. "I'd be careful of my back in that position, ensign."

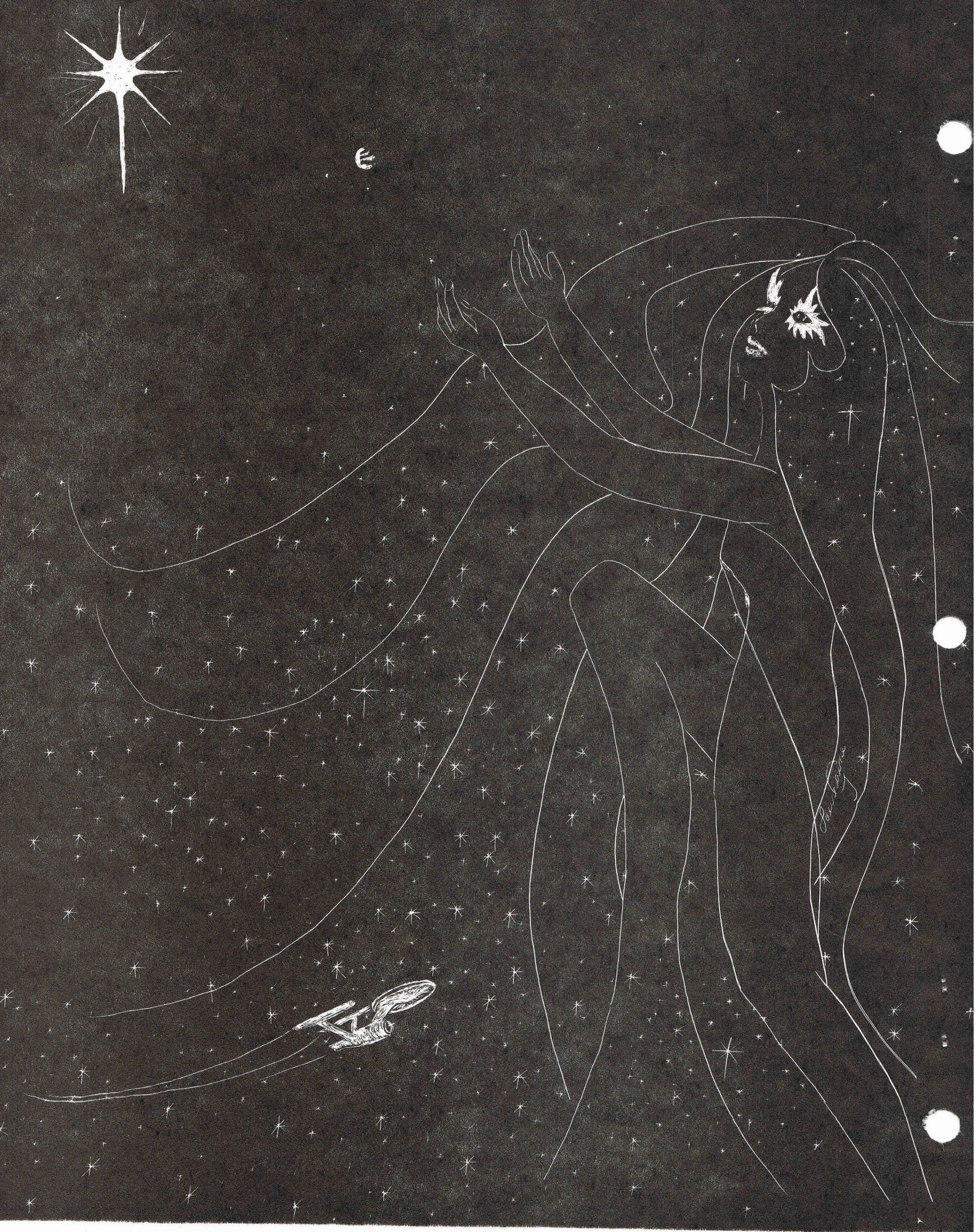
Sukyo relaxed and the captain walked to the door, which silently slid open. In the open doorway, Kirk turned toward Samura, and shrugged his shoulders slightly. Then he was gone.



Sukyo let his muscles relax and his lungs function properly again. *Adventure? Excitement?* he thought wryly. *Even if we never encounter other worlds, I'm going to see plenty of excitement.* He sighed and turned back to the transporter panel. He still had to bring the new officers' personal belongings aboard.

The next three years will be interesting, to say the least.





WINGS OF WONDER

--Valerie McLean

The landing party returned exhausted to the *Enterprise*. Captain Kirk turned to everyone as they stepped from the transporter platform.

"Don't report again for duty till tomorrow. Have a rest, ladies and gentlemen."

The captain himself delegated responsibility to his first officer for the rest of the day, and took himself off to his quarters.

The mission had been emotionally as well as physically demanding, and Kirk took down the least emotionally biased book of his collection, a technical book about the innards of the *Enterprise*. By concentrating on it, he lost himself, his muscles became completely limp, and within minutes he was fast asleep, the book lying on his chest.

Lieutenant Uhura, who had not been in the landing party, came up to the door of one of the girls who had. She knocked, but got no reply. Even when she called out, there was no response. She operated the automatic door latch, and the door slid open. The light was on, and the girl, Marie Byrne, was sitting at the dressing table, her head on her hands and her eyes closed.

Uhura smiled gently. "Marie. Wake up."

The girl did not move, so Uhura went forward to rest a hand on her shoulder. "Marie."

A slight movement of Uhura's hand resulted in Marie collapsing onto the dressing table, but still she did not wake up. Uhura tried more earnestly to get her to awaken, but with no success.

Uhura went out into the corridor to the nearest wall communicator.

"Uhura to sickbay."

Marie was floating somewhere. It was to eternal surprise that she found herself sitting motionless at the dressing table. She considered that for a little while, then began to think of other things. She was free of emotion, free of physical tiredness, and it was good to be so light and airy. It took no effort to think or to move.

She thought of the stars and how free they were and found herself outside the ship's hull, watching the changing patterns of the stars as they moved past. Aware of the movement, she looked at the *Enterprise*, could see the whole of its shape, with the odd light shining out from it, saw the glowing ends of the great power units, could hear the noise of its engines.

She saw the small dome that held the bridge and thought of the interior shape of it.

Almost on the instant she was in the bridge, seeing the instruments and the screen, watching the personnel at their posts, aware of the fluidity of their thoughts and feelings, the ever-changing backwashes of ideas that revolved basically around self. Except for one. Here the pattern was more orderly, going in a fast direct line to solutions to problems, unhampered by emotions. She was curious about the power inherent in that ability and looked more directly at its owner, First Officer Spock.

She must have concentrated on him because suddenly the order was stopped, and a strangely subtle part of the Vulcan self reached out to her. She withdrew briefly, then waited, and let that sense touch her awareness. There was curiosity on both sides. There was an exchange of thoughts and ideas that lasted brief seconds before someone on the bridge called on Spock's more conscious attention.

He withdrew himself from the strange encounter to answer the enquiry, and when they were all quietly back at their posts, he reached out again, but the other consciousness had gone. He puzzled over that.

Marie thought about her own quarters, and found herself there. But the room was empty, the physical part of herself was no longer there. She tried to work out what had happened, and what to do, but could not.

"She's in a very deep coma, and there is nothing in her records to show what could have caused it," Dr. McCoy said to Nurse Chapel. "All we can do at the moment is try different methods of rousing her, but we must take it slowly."

They kept on trying, but nothing succeeded. The body gradually weakened, as the readings above the bed showed, and Dr. McCoy had to introduce one life support system after another. It was one of the very few times in his life when he was stumped. It had seemed like a cataleptic trance, but the normal revival procedure for this had no effect.

Marie found her body lying in Sickbay, saw the various mechanical devices attached to it, and read in the mind of the doctor the danger she was in. It brought no emotional response but she knew that she had a lot left in life to do, and she decided to try to live. She floated back into her body, but somehow she did not feel part of it.

The readings showed a slight increase, her body moved slightly. McCoy's excitement rose. He started again, first by giving her more oxygen.

She seemed to him to be struggling for life. The heart-beat rate changed erratically, breathing was laboured. For several minutes the struggle continued before subsiding again.

Dr. McCoy went on fighting for her life but she was still apart from her body. For the first time she became aware of an emotion, a deep sadness. She saw tears form at the corners of the inert body's eyes, and she knew then that she was still connected. There was still a chance.

Some memories told her of the Vulcan race's abilities in the matter of mind and body, and she thought herself to the bridge again. She found Mr. Spock bent over the computer console, concentrating on some problem.

She concentrated on him. She thought the word "*help*." He did not move, but she felt the change in his awareness, felt the subtle part of his mind reaching out to her. She thought a picture of the sickbay, with her body lying there among all the life support systems, and asked again for help.

It was an unusual experience but he straightened from the computer console.

"Mr. Sulu."

"Sir?"

"You have the con. I shall be with Dr. McCoy if I'm needed."

"Yes, sir."

"Withdrawal?" McCoy asked. "I didn't think humans knew how."

"Some do. It generally requires special training, but included in that training is the knowledge of how to return. She seems to have achieved the withdrawal accidentally and does not know how to return."

"You do, don't you Mr. Spock?" Nurse Chapel asked.

"Yes. The only way to transmit the information, is by way of the Vulcan mind meld."

McCoy looked at him. He knew what it cost Spock in mental, emotional and spiritual effort to achieve a successful mind meld, and he did not like to ask for that kind of help. But Spock seemed to read his mind.

"It is the quickest and surest way. There is not much time."

McCoy nodded; he and Nurse Chapel went to the far side of the room where they stood and watched.

Spock's hands went to Marie's head, and he began to murmur softly, words that drew together the two identities.

She floated down to the inert body. There was still no pull, but she became aware gradually of the more stable consciousness reaching out to her via her own body. She followed it down and she felt a connection, but the body was very weak. Inherent in the return was the threat of unconsciousness, with its likeness to death. She felt fear and knew that she was partly connected. She jerked free. In a moment she felt rather than heard the words of reassurance.

"Trust yourself to me. I will keep you safe till all is well."

She had never relearned how to trust as completely as she had done as a baby and she could not. But still the words came and she tried to think logically. She floated down to her body and felt again the overpowering fear.

"Fear is an emotion," the thought came. "Emotions are not real things. Concentrate on breathing. That is real."

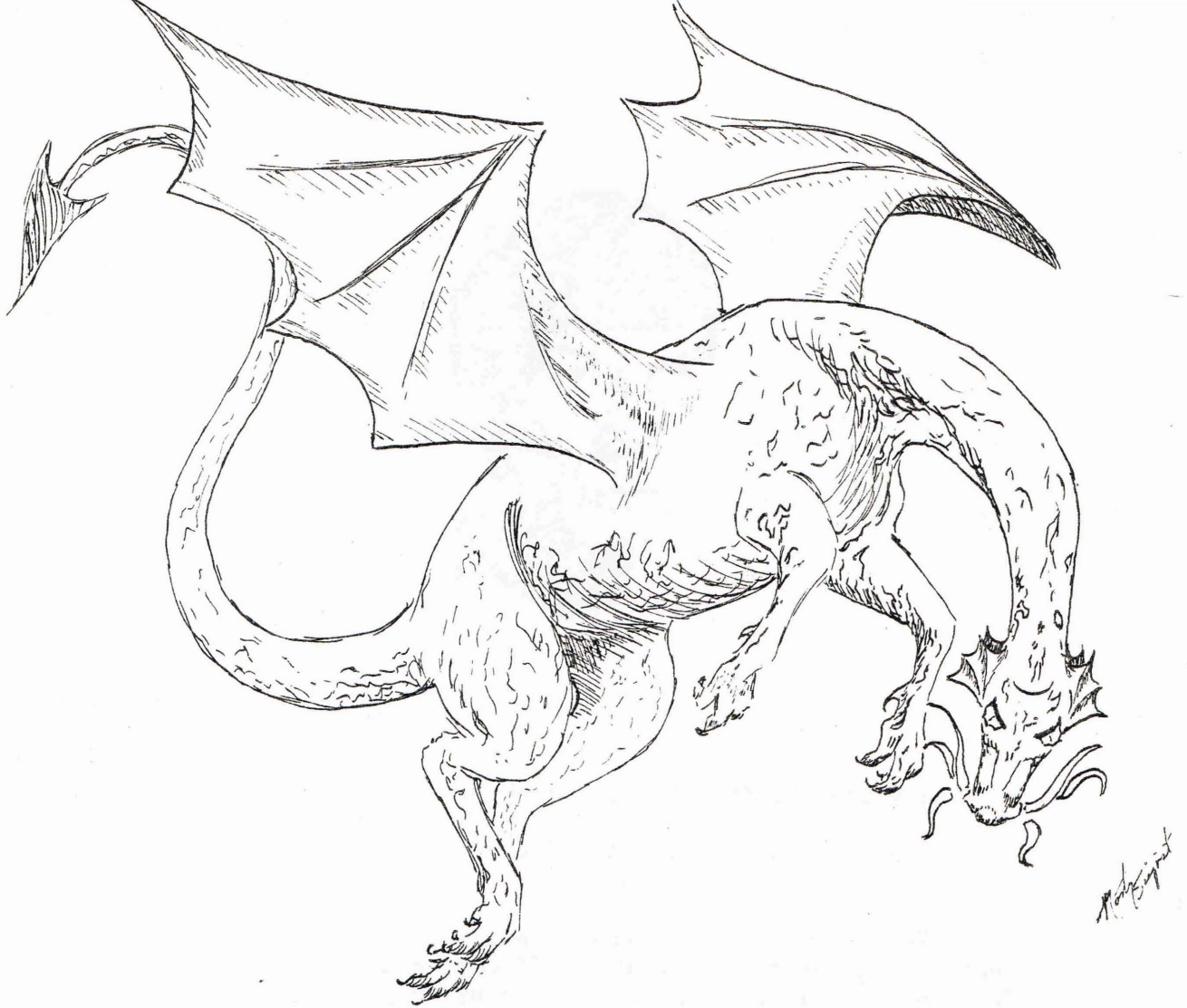
She felt the other mind helping her to concentrate on thought and on logic. Fear came again, in waves, but each time it was less powerful, and she could feel her body breathing. She struggled for consciousness. Her eyes fluttered open, and looked into Spock's own. She was not aware of his physical appearance, only of the calmness, the logic, the sureness to which she clung while she concentrated on keeping herself breathing. Then she was one with her body. Her mouth was open, and breathing became automatic. As normality came slowly back, the other mind as slowly loosed its grip.



She thought the words, *"thank you."*

She was aware of the thought, *"we are all one. We all depend on each other for life."*

Then he was straightening, and she saw him as a separate being, as her commanding officer, and she withdrew from the mental contact in mind confusion. Dr. McCoy was there immediately, helping her.



Caison

Occurrence

~ Signe Jesson

(AUTHOR'S FORWARD: A note of explanation is required here. This story was written shortly after an overdose of Anne McCaffrey's "Dragon" books, and is so inspired.)

CAPTAIN'S LOG, Stardate 7337.7: "The Federation has instructed Starfleet to send the *Enterprise* to conduct what should be a routine planet survey. We are also to establish diplomatic relations with the inhabitants. However, I'm told this isn't one of our "routine" diplomatic missions. The society in question revolves around a large reptilian beast that can be described in no other way except as a "dragon". These creatures possess an exceptional telepathic ability, and as we established orbit Lt. Uhura contacted the leader, Car'el, through his dragon, and obtained permission for us to beam down."

Kirk finished the log entry, snapped the recorder off, and then looked around the Bridge. The crew was relatively idle, having completed the tasks necessary to lock the ship into orbit.

"I wonder if those creatures really look like dragons," Lt. Uhura mused aloud. "And what would you feed one?"

"Communications officers, Lieutenant," Sulu teased. Uhura tossed him a nasty look as the rest of the crew tried to hold back their chuckles of amusement. Uhura noticed the expressions around her and broke into laughter.

"Captain, wouldn't you care to see one of these beasts before we send people down to the planet?" Scotty asked.

"It might help us in our mission if we knew what to expect ahead of time," Spock concurred.

"Alright, I can take a hint. Mr. Checkov, would you please find us a dragon," the Captain gave in, being as curious as the rest of his Bridge crew. Checkov went to the sensors and quickly located a dragon, then engaged the view-screen. None of the crew present were ready for the view that met their eager gazes. The dragon, which all agreed was aptly named, first appeared as a huge bronze head with large, many faceted eyes glinting as the sun reflected off them.

"Back off a bit, Mr. Sulu," Kirk managed to say after a few moments. The helmsman complied and the dragon, complete with wings, scales and claws came into view. Stunned, Sulu's comment was "Wow". Kirk snapped the intercom on and called SickBay. "Bones, take a look, would you?"

"What is it, Jim?" McCoy's voice came over the intercom. "Great Jumping Jehosaphat! A dragon!"

"Still want to go down with us?" Kirk inquired.

"I'd rather be there than here in case one of those things decides you look appetizing," McCoy answered.

"The information that I have indicates that while the reptiles are carnivores, the people maintain herds of animals for them to eat. There is no need for you to worry, Doctor," Spock broke in.

"I'm still going, Spock. You never can tell about these things. I wouldn't be at all surprised if they've never seen a Vulcan before, and who knows? You might be their idea of an hors d'oeuvres," McCoy returned. Spock refrained from further comment, merely raising his eyebrow. Kirk grinned and turned to Mr. Scott. "You have the com, Scotty. Keep an eye out for trouble."

"Aye, sir," Scotty replied and then took command chair as the Captain and First Officer headed for the lift.

As the pair entered the Transporter Room, they were greeted by Dr. McCoy and the remainder of the party. Kyle stood behind the console preparing to beam the party down. "All ready, Captain," he announced.

"Good...shall we go, gentlemen?" Kirk suggested as he stepped up on the platform. Spock, McCoy and the rest followed, moving quickly to their places. When everyone was ready, Kirk gave the order to energize, and the group was beamed to the surface.

The landing party materialized at the edge of a bowl-shaped canyon, its walls pitted with what looked like theatre balconies and cavern entrances. From many of these portals the heads of the dragons appeared, and the creatures began to set up an eerie roaring sound. McCoy shivered involuntarily and turned to Kirk, who was surveying the area cautiously.

"Are you sure this Car'el is friendly? With that kind of a greeting...it sounded more like a signal for a charge."

"Be quiet, Bones, here he comes," Kirk silenced his friend as a tall, dark haired man strode up to the group. "I am Car'el," he introduced himself.

Kirk looked more closely at Car'el. What he saw was a deeply tanned face whose expression was one of reserved cordiality. It was obvious that Car'el was slightly leery of Kirk and the party. Kirk broke his gaze to introduce himself and his associates. "Captain James Kirk of the Starship *Enterprise*. My First Officer, Mr. Spock, our Chief Medical Officer, Dr. McCoy, Lieutenants Johnson and Lindstrom, Ensign Carstairs." Car'el nodded politely to each of them. As he finished the acknowledgement, he was joined by a younger man

who was equally tanned, but was in all other respects, the opposite of Car'el. "My Wing Second, Ka'nor," Car'el told the group. "Come and meet our Queen's Rider, Treyna."

"Queen?" Kirk questioned.

"Even our dragons have a leader, Captain. And as those you see here have riders, so does the Queen. Her main function is to provide the replacements for the dragons here, but she is also the defender of her territory. If she seems a bit edgy, it may be because there is a rogue queen on the loose," was Car'el's explanation.

"I see," Kirk replied, then turned to the party. "Spock, McCoy, you come with me. The rest of you go out and start collecting your information." He then turned back and the trio followed Car'el and Ka'nor toward one of the portals in the wall of the canyon. When Kirk had first looked around, he had noticed this particular entrance because it had been so much larger than the others seemed to be. Now as Car'el invited them to enter, it was apparent that the greater size was necessary. As the three peered into the surroundings, their surveying looks were met by a huge gold dragon whose size seemed to dwarf even the extremely high ceilings of this cavern. "The queen's back of this area." He then moved toward the quarters and soon they arrived at their host's home.

"Treyna, these are the Federation representatives Izon told us to expect," Car'el then introduced them to the lovely raven-haired Treyna. "Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy, my mate, Treyna."

"A pleasure, Ma'm. Car'el, is there some place where we could talk? I've got much to discuss with you, and I can see my companions are eager to satisfy their own curiosities," Kirk asked their host.

"Of course, come with me to the Council Chambers." They followed Car'el's lead, were soon seated around a heavy round table and deep into conversation. Kirk finished his business as quickly as he could, knowing that both Spock and McCoy were anxious to do some investigating of this unusual culture. As soon as Kirk had completed his mission, McCoy asked, "Car'el, would you mind if I called the ship and asked for some additional equipment? I'd like to take some readings on you and the others here for my records." Car'el gave his approval and McCoy thanked him, then walked away to call the ship.

"McCoy to *Enterprise*."

"*Enterprise*," Uhura answered.

"Would you have Dr. McIntyre beam down with the biocomputer and portable lab please?" McCoy requested.

"Yes sir, Dr. McCoy," she responded. McCoy thanked her, signed off, and returned to the group.

Uhura changed channels and alerted Dr. Adrienne McIntyre, the junior MD on duty.

"McIntyre here."

"Dr. McCoy would like you to beam down with the biocomputer and portable lab, Doctor," Uhura relayed the message.

"I thought we'd given up making housecalls," Adrienne grumbled while she had thoughts of stringing up her immediate superior by his thumbs using the biocomputer and portable lab as counterweights. "Alright, I'll be down shortly." She pushed the stray strand of silver hair out of her face, snapped the intercom off, and headed for the storage area to pick up the equipment; then carried it to the Transporter Room.

Kirk and Spock were conversing with the dragon riders when Adrienne arrived. The Captain was the first to notice her, and he nudged Spock. "Come on, it looks like Dr. McIntyre could use some help." He and the First Officer strode over to the doctor and picked up the equipment. Kirk was in an exceptionally jovial mood, and saw a chance to goad the somewhat sharp-tempered Adrienne. He faked a groan as he lifted the equipment.

"Couldn't find anything heavier, could you, Dr. McIntyre? What's in here? Bricks?" Kirk teased. It brought about the expected result. Adrienne lost her usually controlled temper.

"If it's too heavy for you, Captain, then give it to me. I managed to carry that equipment from SickBay to the Transporter Room without any help." Adrienne suddenly realized what was going on. She saw an opening to the Captain's ego, and promptly took it. "And if you're that out of shape, then perhaps I'd better suggest to Dr. McCoy that he insists you spend a few hours a week in a physical fitness program." At this, McCoy, who knew just how proud Kirk was of his physical prowess, tried to hold back his laughter as he joined the group. Kirk was flabbergasted, but managed to control his impulse to discipline the green-eyed doctor, and answered her levelly. "Point taken, Doctor."

"Thank-you, sir," Adrienne replied.

"Come on, let's get this equipment set up," McCoy interrupted before his junior MD could get herself any deeper into hot water. "Oh, Car'el, Ka'nor, may I present Dr. Adrienne McIntyre, one of my staff," McCoy introduced her to the two riders. Car'el inclined his head politely,



but Ka'nor smiled warmly at her and stepped over to offer his help. "May I be of service to you, Dr. McIntyre?"

Adrianne smiled back. "Yes, thank-you Ka'nor. Could you take that case from the Captain and bring it along? Is there somewhere I could set up?"

"Take her back into our quarters, Ka'nor," Car'el directed, "And introduce her to Treyna." Ka'nor nodded and the pair strolled off toward the quarters. McCoy reached over to take the biocomputer from Spock. "I'll see you later, Captain. Car'el, could you ask some of your people to let me run these tests on them?"

"Certainly, Doctor. I'll go talk to some of the riders and their mates, and we'll meet you in my quarters shortly." Car'el told McCoy, then turned back to Kirk and Spock. "Mr. Spock, would you care to see the underground caison? There are some artifacts you might be interested in seeing, as well as some charts I'd like to have your opinion on."

"Indeed? Yes, I'd like to see these materials," Spock answered. "Are you coming, Captain?"

"Yes, I am, Spock. I'm sure there'll be time to explore things up here later," Kirk replied, taking a reluctant look around him. "Let's go see the caison."

With Car'el leading the way, the three started down a sloping passageway to a series of large interlinking caves, dimly lit by flaming torches in holders on the walls. Car'el showed Spock the various areas containing the artifacts and charts. After a few moments, he turned to the two officers. "I'm sorry...Izon tells me that Treyna is looking for me. I have to leave, but I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Go ahead, Car'el. It looks like Mr. Spock will be busy studying these charts for a while, and I'll just look around," Kirk told the Wing Leader. With that, Car'el left to join his mate on the surface.

Spock scanned the charts intently while Kirk looked at the mural covered walls. After a while, the Captain grew bored and started to explore the tunnel entrance that led out of the room.

"Mr. Spock, I'm going to look down some of these tunnels," he called to the Vulcan.

"Perhaps that isn't wise, Captain. The tunnels are old and may not be safe," Spock advised.

"Nonsense, Spock. I'll be careful," Kirk brushed the warning off. "I hadn't planned on testing the walls." Spock gave Kirk a searching look, then turned back to the charts.

Kirk headed off toward the entrance to one of the many passages. He took a torch from its holder on the wall and started down the dark tunnel.

Above, the rogue queen flew restlessly as she sensed the nearness of a rival. Her instincts warned her she must choose her time well and she dropped lightly from the sky to bide her time. As she perched, some boulders at the edge of the cliff were dislodged and began to tumble down the side of the mountain. They were joined on their journey by others until a large avalanche roared down the cliffs, shaking the already brittle network of tunnels underneath. Their structures weakened under the weight of the falling debris and began crumbling, then whole sections collapsed under the strain.

Kirk had cautiously traveled down the lightless path for several minutes when he began to wonder if Spock hadn't been right. He stopped to explore the area more thoroughly. Suddenly from the depths, came an ominous rumble. Alarmed, Kirk started back in the direction he'd come. All at once, the walls started to topple down around him, then with a sharp pain, the blackness closed around him.

Spock studied the charts, noting the many fine details and intricate maps. At once he heard a rumble, felt the floor shake, and then saw a cloud of dust appear in the mouth of the tunnel Kirk had gone down. He stood up quickly and walked toward the entrance, concern mounting in him. "Captain, are you all right? Captain!" Spock called out to the black surroundings. There was no response. He pulled his communicator from its place and opened it, thinking that maybe Kirk hadn't been able to hear his voice. "Spock to Captain Kirk, come in," he spoke, becoming more concerned at each call. After several minutes he decided there was nothing else he could do except follow the Captain's path to the cave-in. Taking a torch, Spock traveled down the passage, calling Kirk's name as he went. Finally he reached the site of the cave-in. There was no sign of the Captain. Spock looked worriedly at the debris, then took his tricorder and searched for signs of life. A wave of relief flooded over him as the sensor showed a life reading on what Spock hoped was the other side of the pile of rubble. "I've got to go for help," he decided. He tried once more to reach Kirk, then turned and went back up the tunnel as quickly as he could.

McCoy and Adrianne had been busily taking readings on the volunteers for what Adrianne felt must have been hours when all at once the mood changed. The giant queen, who had been sleeping in her cavern, awakened with an earshattering shriek and lumbered out toward the canyon. Treyna ran through the room crying, "The rogue queen is over the canyon! Larsa has gone after her! Quickly...we must stop them from fighting...if Larsa is injured..." Riders leapt from their seats and sped for their mounts.

Adrianne was frightened and confused. She grabbed Ka'nor's arm as he started to leave. "Ka'nor, what's happening?"

"A rogue queen is challenging Larsa for her territory," Ka'nor explained.

"Rogue? How...? You said all the dragons were domesticated," Adrianne questioned.

"Somehow a queen egg was lost from one of our cities. It hatched and managed to survive. This queen plagues the territories, trying to rid them of their queens so she may claim the bronzes. We have to either drive her away or destroy her before she has the chance to injure or kill Larsa. If we lose our queen, this territory will die," he informed her.

"Die...Why?" Adrianne gasped.

"Larsa has no eggs in the Hatching Grounds now, thus no replacement queen," he gently told her. "I must go help." With that, Ka'nor ran off toward his dragon.

Adrianne went to McCoy's side. "Come on...". He looked at her a moment then the two ran to the entrance to watch.

The area was in bedlam. Riders and dragons leapt for the sky and the conflict in it, attempting to avert the disaster. On the ground, all eyes were turned upward, wanting to witness the fate of their queen.

Spock emerged from the underground entrance. He paused a moment to adjust to the brightness of the light, then spied McCoy and Adrianne across the canyon from him. He looked around, noting the scene above him, then started toward the two doctors. McCoy saw him coming and a look of concern crossed his features as he noticed Spock's dirty uniform and smudged face. "Spock, where's Jim?" McCoy asked anxiously. As Spock started to answer, Adrianne cried out, "Dr. McCoy, Mr. Spock, look!" The two queens were in the midst of a group of darting dragons as the riders maneuvered to try and decoy the rogue queen. Spock turned his attention back to his companions. "The Captain is trapped in the tunnels. There was a cave-in..."

"Where, Spock?"

"Near the caison where I was studying the charts. The Captain left to explore some of the passages..."

"And you let him go by himself!" McCoy exploded. "Let's go. Jim may be dead by now."

"I do not think that the three of us can free him, Doctor."

"Mr. Spock, it's obvious everyone here is too busy to help us. We'll have to try on our own. At least it's better than doing nothing," McCoy stated. "Have you called the ship?"

"Spock to *Enterprise*," Spock had already gotten his communicator from its place. "Mr. Scott, come in."

"Scott here, Mr. Spock," the Chief Engineer answered the call.

"Mr. Scott, we need a rescue party immediately. The Captain is trapped in a cave-in."

"Mr. Spock, I canna' do that. We've had a transporter burnout and it'll be at least another hour before I'd dare send anyone down," Scott told him. "I'll send a party down in a shuttlecraft."

"Negative, but complete repairs as soon as possible," Spock said. "We'll keep you informed." He closed the communicator and then started for the tunnel entrance, McCoy and Adrianne at his heels.

"Which passageway did Jim go down?" McCoy asked.

"Follow me," was the answer. The trio went quickly into the tunnel and arrived at the caison in a short time. Spock led the way to one of the entrances and the three disappeared down the dark passage. As they reached the cave-in, McCoy took his tricorder out and scanned the area. "There's a life reading...Thank God!" He breathed a sigh of relief.

"Let's attempt to dig a hole...carefully," Spock warned. They set to clearing the debris and managed to open a space large enough to see into. McCoy peered through it into the darkness and called for the missing Kirk. "Jim, where are you, are you all right?" There came no response. "We'll have to dig this big enough to crawl through." All three set to work with a will. When the task was complete, McCoy started forward. Spock put a restraining hand on his shoulder. "Doctor..."

"No arguments, Spock. I'm of more use than you, and I'm going." McCoy angrily shrugged the hand off his shoulder and climbed to the level of the hole. He slid through feet first and slipped down the other side of the pile. Spock reached through and handed him a torch. McCoy looked around the area revealed by the flickering torch. There was nothing. He called out, hoping against hope that Kirk had just moved down the tunnel. There came no answering hail. He began to search. McCoy had just begun to walk along the edge of the rubble when he tripped. Regaining his feet, he looked at the object he'd fallen over. "Oh my God...!" he gasped. "Spock get in here! Jim's buried under the slide." McCoy had tripped over his Captain's hand. Spock and Adrianne crawled quickly through the aperture and they began to work to release the entombed man.



When Kirk had been freed of the boulders and dirt, McCoy and Adrianne began to examine him. "I get readings of fractured ribs and a suspicious looking right arm," Adrianne told McCoy.

"What do you mean by suspicious, Dr. McIntyre? Haven't you learned to read your instruments yet?" McCoy snapped.

"The readings are unclear as to the condition of the humerus. I can't tell if it's fractured or not," she answered, attempting to control her urge to tell her superior what she thought of his accusations.

McCoy stopped his own examination and made a reading, "Yes, it's broken. I'll take care of things here, since you seem incapable of doing your job," he growled.

"Very well, Dr. McCoy," Adrianne said stiffly. With that she rose and marched toward the entrance.

"Dr. McIntyre--Adrianne--Come back here, please," McCoy called to her. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't be taking things out on you. Will you please check for concussion?" Adrianne relaxed and completed her part of the exam. "Affirmative, Dr. McCoy, and it looks fairly severe to me." McCoy finished immobilizing the fractured arm, and administered a mild pain killer and stimulant. In a few moments, Kirk began to stir. McCoy bent over him and spoke, "Easy Jim, just lie still. We'll have you out of here in no time."

"Bones...what?" Kirk managed.

"Spock let you get yourself into trouble," McCoy told him. "Now stay put and be quiet. Spock's gone to get help from the ship. You're going to be okay." Kirk relaxed and closed his eyes. McCoy motioned to the technicians that had just arrived to bring the stretcher to him, and shortly he had the Captain in SickBay. Spock remained behind to inform Car'el of the incident and finish the mission. Adrianne followed the First Officer to the surface to collect the equipment and say goodbye.

As the two reached the canyon floor, they were greeted by the sight of a motionless queen dragon. Adrianne stiffened, then ran to Ka'nor and Car'el, who stood beside it.

"Not Larsa, please," she prayed. "It's not...?"

"No, this is the rogue. Despite all we tried to do, Larsa and she battled with the result being that Larsa managed to break this one's neck," Car'el informed her. "Where is Captain Kirk?"

"We had an accident in the tunnels near the caison. The Captain went to explore and happened to be caught in a cave-in," Spock explained.

"It was probably caused by the rogue queen. Two of my riders were coming in from that direction and saw her at the outer edge of the canyon. When she landed, the motion dislodged some loose boulders and started an avalanche," Car'el related. "Will the Captain be all right?"

"I've been assured that he will recover fully, and I'm to complete the formal agreement with you. Dr. McIntyre is here to recover our equipment," Spock told the Wing Leader. "We have received orders, so if we might finish..." Car'el agreed, and the two strode toward the Council Chambers. Adrienne grabbed Ka'nor. "Would you help me pack equipment?" He consented, and they strolled off toward the living quarters.

Kirk awoke to the steady throb of a headache. "Who's got the sledge hammer?" he moaned.

"Quiet there, sir," McCoy ordered as he came to the bedside.

"What happened?" Kirk asked.

"You caved a tunnel in on yourself. Just relax, you'll be here for a couple of days. Spock is down finishing up, and then we've got orders to head out."

Kirk resigned himself to his fate. "Okay, but..."

"But nothing. Go back to sleep," McCoy directed, and Kirk had no choice but to comply.

OUR ALTERNATE ENDING FOR CAISON OCCURANCE

"The Captain seems to be all right except for a badly mangled hand," Adrienne reported.

"Uh...wonder how that happened. Must have been a rock."

"But it looks like there's a footprint on it," Adrienne pointed out.

"Musta been a funny shaped rock," McCoy said nervously.

"Doctor, look! Your footprint matches, see?" Adrienne took McCoy's foot and he lost his balance, cracking his head on the floor. "Doctor, Doctor?" No answer.

Adrienne looked at McCoy's outstretched figure. "Musta been a rock," she mused.

Later after McCoy released the Captain, Kirk made his way to the Bridge. Scott and McCoy, who had been standing to one side conversing conspiratorily, escaped his first glance around the Bridge. However, Scott saw him and quickly changed the subject. McCoy turned to find out what had made Scotty react, and came face to face with Kirk. The Captain looked around nervously, then asked, "Uh...Bones, when you dug me out, you didn't perhaps find a little notebook lying around, did you?"

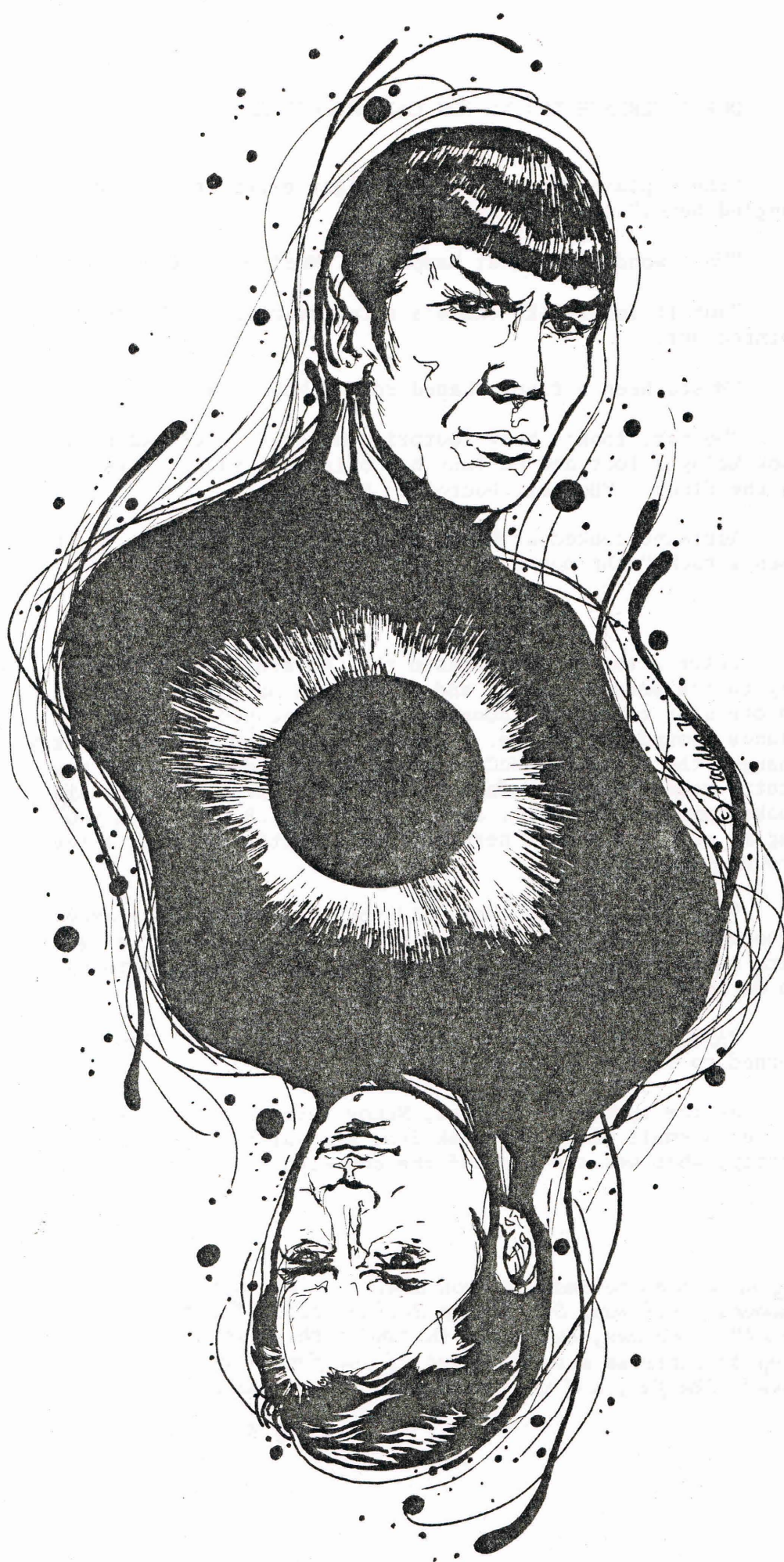
"No, Jim, not me. Why, did you lose one?" McCoy asked innocently. "Sorry I can't help you. Guess I'd better get back to SickBay. Scotty, didn't you say you had something to do down in Engineering?"

"Aye, that I did, and I'd better get to it." They turned to leave.

As the turbolift started, McCoy turned to Scott who pulled a small black notebook from his waistband. "Now, Scotty, what was the name of the one with the four stars..."

"Why an Alternate Ending?" you ask. . . Why not? As the esteemed gentleman, Sir Edmund Hillary said, "Because it was there!" (Besides, currently in fandom there exists a tendency to satirize a vast amount of the fanfic written. It looked like fun, and we just wanted to get our jibes in first!)

--Marty & Signe



ENCOUNTER

--Ingrid Cross

Quite suddenly, he was afraid. It was the first time, and he had no idea how it would feel. Would it be a ripping away of his innermost feelings, his deepest thoughts, his core of inner control? He braced himself, ready to fight it with all the strength he possessed...when he felt the other's presence lean toward him. Nearer it came, closer to his body, fingers outstretched in a gesture both menacing and gentle. The sense of evil blew away on the wind and startled, he realized that this was Spock, his friend, who wished to share his thoughts.

He relaxed.

He had never lost the disturbing sense of violation he experienced whenever it was necessary to enter another's mind. The remote voice he knew to be his human half whispered that he was afraid, scared...and that such thoughts were normal. But the strident voice of Logic stabbed at his small inner voice and calmly, smoothly declared that such turmoil was unnecessary...Logic dictated that the circumstances warranted these actions. Still, he found it difficult to shake the icy core which spread its ache throughout his soul. Slowly, he mentally recited the exercises which allowed him to regain necessary control...to move apart from the arguing factions and become a third party to all the confusion.

He was ready.

It was a gentle, nudging tendril of curiosity brushing against the walls in his mind. It was Fear and Trouble and the distant awareness that perhaps this violated his Command Oath. Perhaps he should remain apart from this contact...let his mind take control of his own body's actions, and leave his thoughts free from any outside influences. The lives he felt beside him were his obligation...but if Spock could help them, then so be it. He was in command...he needed to retain his clearest thought-processes. The giving-over of responsibilities to one who could reasonably help was not failure-it was some sort of vague victory.

But a part of him cried out for Spock's help.

Fascinating. The weight of responsibility is a cruel burden, a force he has more than once suspected, yet never confirmed. The loneliness that is his friend's tears at him, draws him into a maelstrom of reeling sensations that frighten him. He tries to pull free, tries to remember who he is, and what business he needs to finish. This is much more difficult than he had ever imagined...for an instant he cannot throw himself clear of the whirling emotions he has always sought to suppress within himself...he reaches out and shouts silently for CONTROL! I MUST REGAIN...I AM... KIRK! NO!

i am spock

The message is temporarily forgotten. The two have found each other...and the finding is something more beautiful than they might have suspected. It is a soaring symphony...a cacophony of sights, sounds, textures neither have separately experienced, but a blend of all they have ever touched, tasted, heard. It is a song...a seagull's flight alone...above the ground, into the clouds, higher than any intergalactic vessel has ventured. Up and up...whirling and joining and moving together in a harmony no musician has ever conceived of.

There are questions which are answered...questions once vague and unclear, now crystalized into perfect patterns. The two minds have generated a sphere of mental harmony, reaching deeply into all bodies of knowledge. Two minds probe...dig...burrow for memories. The memories provide the necessary focal point...and again, questions. Quests for information on new images, fresh colors one has always taken for granted, and the other wishes to incorporate into his own memory-cells.

Seagulls, Jim?

An explanation, wordless yet utterly precise. A breaking of the clouds and

Ah. I see.

A soundless peal of laughter rings between two entities. Spock? L'miurs?

The other projects a thought-picture and again, there is clarity.

And yet, despite all the joy and laughter and peace they find, there is still an inner core of darkness each brings to the joining...a deep blackness wherein they separately experience loneliness.

Nothing can or will soothe these aches.

The problem which brought them together faces them now. A voice rings out, as though the verbalization will make the message easier to grasp for one of the halves.

They are wisps of clouds on a horizon...they cannot harm you...I am near; they are merely spectres of what you expect them to be...

The tone is warmth, security...Love.

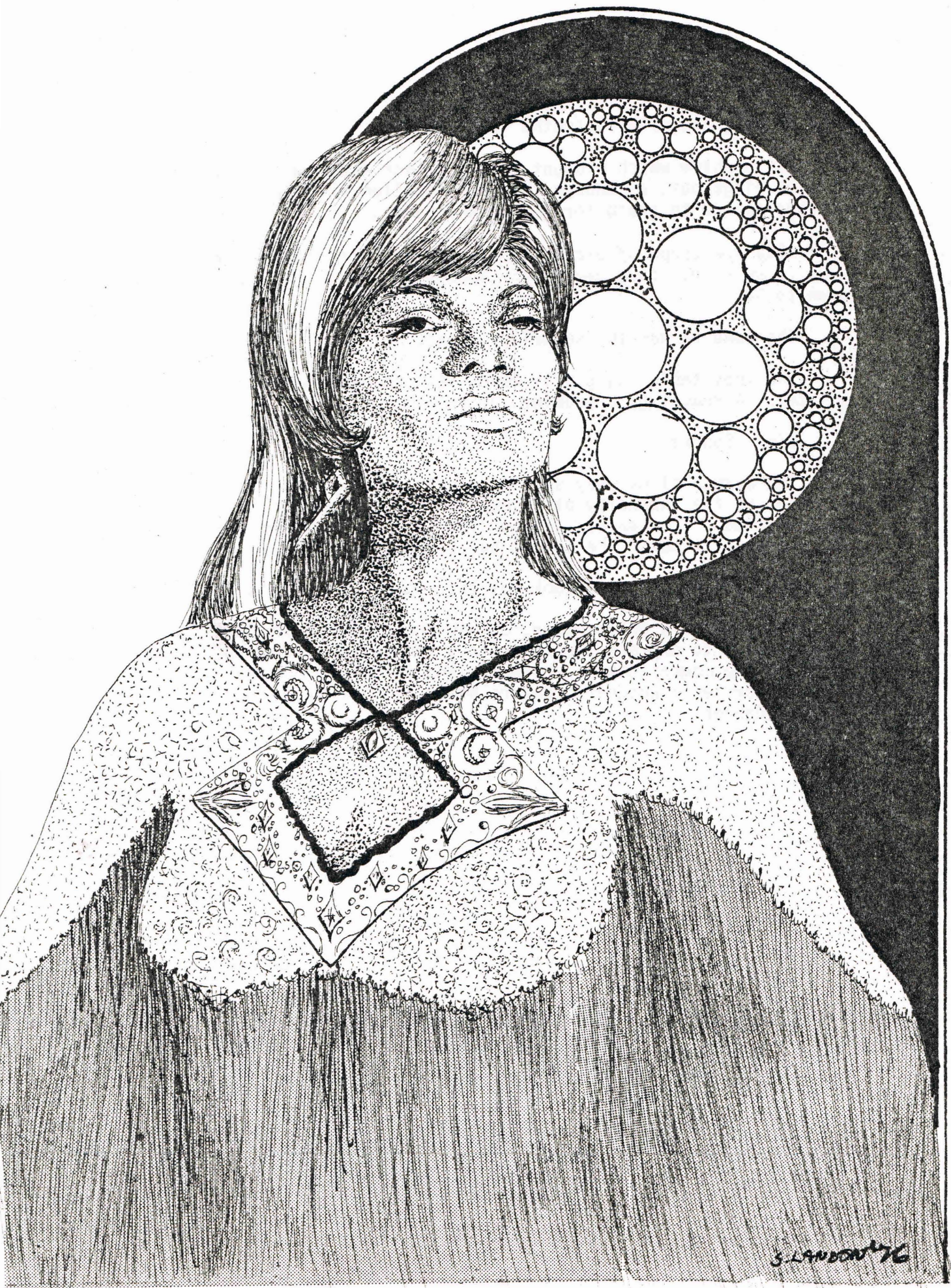
The inevitable tug gently makes its presence known. *It is time.* A reaching, a groping, a cry.

Jim? Spock?

The warmth slips away softly, gently, slowly. He is bewildered by the intensity of an emotion he could never phrase aloud. *I never called you 'friend'...* He believes that he could say it now. The moment has presented itself.

But when he turns to look for the other, he is gone.

Not much of a philosopher, Jim is uncertain of the best way in which to express the thoughts...feelings...that need airing. The moment comes...passes...and is lost forever. A gentle smile is adequate, before he turns away to face yet another danger.



DANCER

--Ingrid Cross

The music pounded insistently, its rhythm forcing her pulse to blend with the frantic drumbeats, the snaking melody of the flutes.

The dancer, a slender figure of black gold, now twisted sensuously, now swirled in a dazzling display of finesse and feminine wiles.

Her surroundings faded . . . merged into a single waiting onlooker whose dark features blended with the murky night. The Beloved One stood smiling the desired approval she constantly strove for. Her movements pleased him, excited him.

Her eyes met his, and understanding flashed warmly between them. She moved slowly toward him, her body responded firmly to the call of the eerie, windy notes of a single flute.

Yearnings long-buried pushed to the surface, shouted for attention. Hands touched, glided and ignited flames.

The music became a symphony of one flute reaching for new heights, glorious passions. The two sought familiar hollows in eager bodies now consumed in flames.

The ache of fire quenched the loneliness of separated hours and time now obligingly suspended itself in some dimension left unnamed by modern minds. The merging was fire and ice, piercing light and soothing darkness of spring nights. Lips found beloved skin and the music coiled itself around dancer and watcher . . . wrapped them in an envelope of love and security, timelessness and---

"Lieutenant?"

A distant voice of command broke the mood of reverie which had wound itself around communications officer Uhura. Liquid brown eyes turned and saw her captain's hazel ones... concerned and amused.

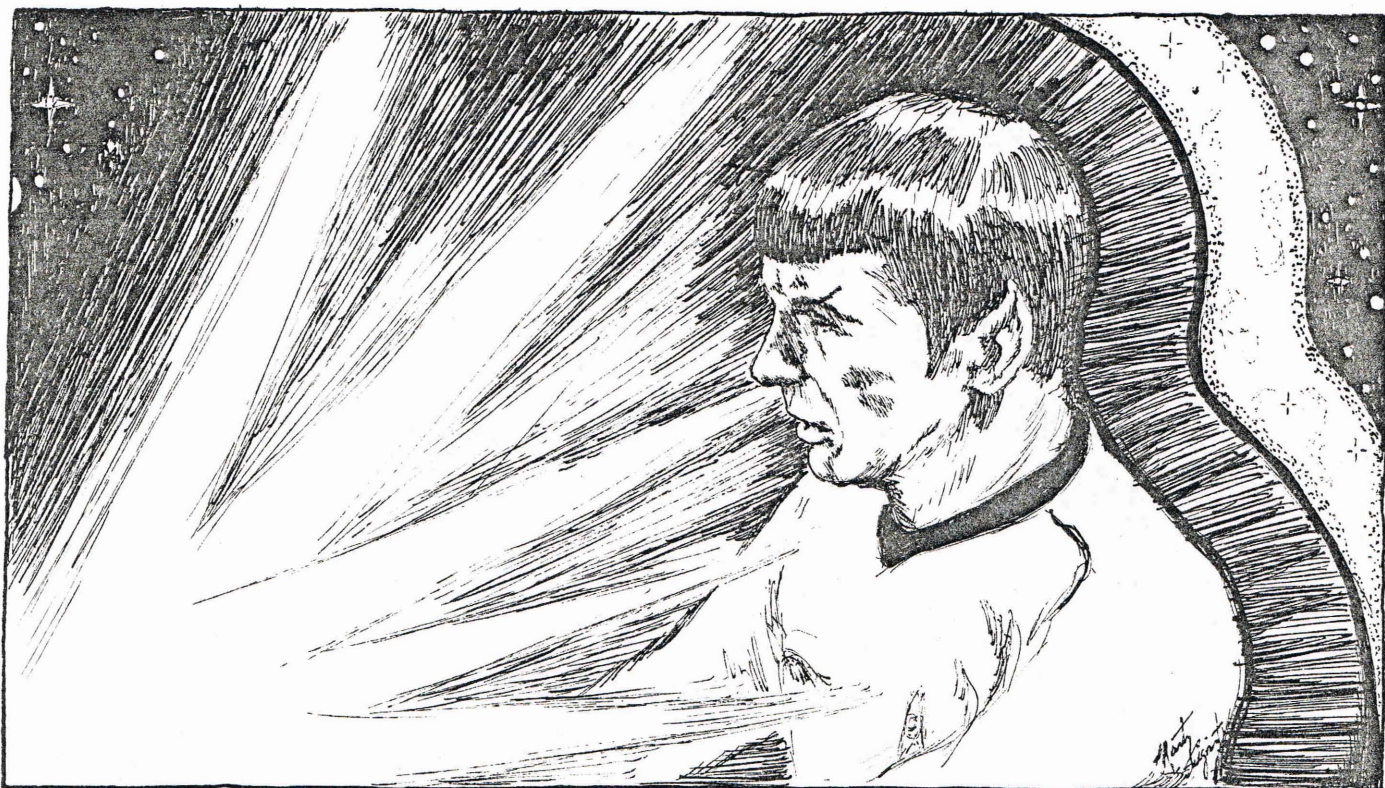
"Ah, you're back with us, Uhura." A smile.

A moment of regret and longing flashed across her features--to be with Carlos!--and was immediately replaced by competent efficiency.

"Yes, sir." Returned stare for stare.

"Good. Send this message to Star Fleet. 'Request permission to...'"

A small part of her brain responded to the command and left her thoughts free to travel. Her eyes momentarily unfocused, staring through the ship's hull toward a continent on a planet light-years away. Her ear sought the pulsing rhythm of distant drums...and her heart found the Beloved One.



THE SIGHT OF KOLLOS

--Leslie Fish

*Oh rich and marvelous mind, my friend, farewell.
Parting is necessary. Unbind. Outflow. Regret for this
loss, this return to my limited self . . .*

*--Blue light. Blizzard of blinding, corruscating
flames --
The box! No goggles! Too late . . . I can't. . . Too late!*

*. . . Blinding, weaving blue flames, swirling, spinning. . .
Holding the eyes . . . can't look away . . . I can't . . .
Depth gone wrong. Miles deep. Dimensions twist.
Swirling lights form patterns. Too quick to grasp.
Suggestions of things that wrench the mind . . . off-center . . .
Flame-shapes. Impossible forms. Incomprehensible . . .
Pulling me . . . apart . . . I stretch thin--spun out --
Spinning, changing . . . No! Please! NO! -- I . . . I . . . what?*

The light stops. Box . . .closed. Shapes all wrong.
Distorted. What's wrong with my eyes? What is this place?
What is?

Somewhere a sound . . .a voice . . .stretched long.
Sound. . .wrong. It seems to be calling . . . Is that my
name? A warning?

"Spock, don't look! Cover your eyes!" Too late.
(Time stretches. Motion distorts.) I am . . .in danger?
Danger from what? From Kollos? No, not he.
He cannot harm me. No, not a mind like that . . .
So vast, so deep, so . . .beautiful. He is beautiful!
Beautiful, past the power of the mind to grasp!
All light, all motion, all depth of swirling thought . . .

He is gone. He has left me alone in this all-wrong place.
And I am . . .what? Slowly, look down at myself . . .

No! NO! Horrible past believing! NO!
This dead-thick, lightless covering over . . .solids . . .
Thick, semi-solid, alive in fluid and darkness . . .
I cannot endure it! Horror breaks free in sound --
Even the sound is hideous! Panic -- flight --
The motion is wrong! Stiff -- no flowing --
Horror at every turn -- I can't get away!

Lights. Shapes. Motions. More of them. More like me.
One reaches toward me, murmuring meaningless sounds . . .
No! Don't touch me! Get away! Leave me alone!
Oh! Oh, the feel of it -- too much! I CAN'T STAND THIS!
Panic, horror, drowning and choking me --

Light --

Oh, peace. Oh, blessed relief! Yes, let me sink.
Darkness. Silence. No motion. No feeling. No thought.
Yes, let me stay here. Go away, world. Let me sleep

Editor's Note:

The following story requires a bit of introduction. "Night Creatures" is one chapter of a series of stories now being written by Mandi Schultz and Cheryl Rice. This series deals with Kirk primarily, in a sort of "alternate universe", and is entitled "Diamonds and Rust". Other installments of the series are scheduled to be printed in other fanzines.

Chantal, whom you will meet in this story, is a main character in the series, and is a...uhem...an acquaintance of Jim Kirk's.

Night Creatures



by

Mandi Schultz

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Obedying orders, they rose from sleeping mats on the floor and slowly lined the walls of the cell, their hands clasped behind their necks. Their eyes blinked, shying from the sudden light, as four uniformed soldiers entered the room. One of them, the apparent superior, walked slowly about the room, pausing before each of the men who stood against the walls before moving on to the next.

"This one," he said, pointing, and turned to his companions. Then, "You will collect your belongings and come with us now. I will await you outside."

The youth eyed the officer with not undue suspicion in silence.

"The rest of you," the soldier continued, "as you were." The boy went to his mat and picked up his shirt and boots, all he had managed to salvage before, as the others returned to their places to resume the fitful sleep they all had shared.

"Jim, what's happening? What do you think they want?" his brother asked.

"Don't worry, Sam. Maybe they'll listen to us now. There's been so much activity here, it's probably taken them this long to get through the red tape. I told you when Governor Kodos discovered we were here as prisoners, he'd let us go."

"Then why didn't they tell me to come with you?" The younger boy stared impatiently at his brother.

"Come on, Sam, you know how it is. I'm older so he probably wants to talk to me."

"I'm scared, Jim. What if you don't..."

He put his hand on the boy's shoulders. "I'll be back, don't worry. You'll see, he'll tell us it's all been a mistake and they'll let us go. That's all it is, Sam, and after all, it's about time. Now go back to sleep, and don't worry."

Sam nodded and went to his own place, apprehensive yet hopeful as he watched his brother go through the door that locked again behind him.

Outside, the solitary soldier remained. "You will follow me," he said curtly, and then began to lead him down the dimly lit hallway. They had been on Tarsus IV only four days when Governor Kodos had invoked martial law. Immediately, soldiers filled the streets and people were taken from their homes to be placed in detention camps until further notice.

Cadet James Kirk hadn't known at first what it was all about. With his brother George - Sam for short - they were returning to school. As honor students participating in the newly founded Galactic Educational Exchange Program they had been sent for a trimester of studies at the highly respected Learning Center of Arcturia on the third planet of that system. Courses completed, they were anxious to return to their own prep school as well as to their classmates with whom they could enjoy spending what was left of the hiatus before the next season's classes began. They had booked passage on the Leilian, a second class passenger liner, hoping to impress their headmasters with their frugality, and also because it would reach home three weeks ahead of all the other available ships since it had no prolonged stop-overs. Then came the call from Tarsus.

As intended, they had remained onboard the Leilian when she docked. Her stop-over there was described as direly necessary in order to pick up passengers in need of immediate transport. For some reason, unexplained delays occurred, and the passengers were invited from the ship and given accommodations on the surface. It was only when martial law went into effect that they had heard anything about the situation existing on the planet, so close was their comfortable confinement. They also learned that the Leilian had answered a false distress call. Since the ship's size was unknown, her food synthesizers were greatly desired on the planet's surface. Shortly thereafter, as the post atomic war Earth adage, went, all hell broke loose.

Tarsus IV was an Earth colony established many years before. Jim has known that much. What he didn't know, or at least hadn't remembered, was the problem of the mutant fungus, now gone out of control and fast destroying virtually all the food supplies. By the time it was arrested, it was nearly too late. What remained untainted would not be sufficient to feed 8000 people until the Federation ship enroute with supplies would arrive.

The day the passengers of the Leilian heard that rumor it was actively confirmed by the soldiers who came to put them into detention areas along with the colonists. They were allowed to take what they wore or could carry, and in Jim's case it had been the former, all his meager scholastic's baggage being still aboard the ship. A dozen people or more were assigned to single-room cells, hastily prepared, with reed mats on the floor and a solitary lavatory facility fixture in one corner.

Indignant at first, he tried to tell the soldier that he, too, was a Federate, a prep school cadet, and surely, if he could just see the Governor...But he was ignored.

Now, he thought, still following the solitary soldier through a labyrinth of halls, he'd have a chance. Kodos was an old soldier, he might even have known the senior Kirk. Surely at least he'd let him and Sam out of that awful room and let them wait for the Federation ship. Absently, he noticed they had come to a more luxuriously decorated section of the complex than they had previously been in.

"The Governor is within," the soldier said as he stopped before a particular door. He gestured to the bundle the boy held. "Dress now."

Nervously, Jim pulled his cadet's grey shirt over his head and tugged on his boots.

"You would do well to listen well to what he will tell you," the soldier said as he opened the door.

Within he saw there were six other boys, apparently within close range of his own age, each with a uniformed soldier standing behind him. Before them lay the expanse of a vast office, at the opposite end of which three men, soldiers again, could be seen standing around a desk. He couldn't see the man sitting behind the desk but he assumed it was Kodos. Thank God, he told himself, it will all be over soon, as soon as he could talk to him. Nervously, he ran his fingers through his hair, realizing he wasn't exactly the image of an honors cadet. But surely the Governor would understand that...

The soldiers near it saluted the figure behind the desk who rose as they turned to leave and followed some few steps behind them. The look on their faces as they passed bothered Kirk: he couldn't fathom it. Several steps away, the Governor stopped and seemed to scrutinize the group.

"Lt. Schoenn, yours will remain," were the only words the Governor spoke before he returned to his desk.

Trying to ignore the sudden weakness he felt in his knees, Jim took a deep breath and crossed the room as the others left.

Kodos was a man small of stature. His hair was steel grey and he sported a full moustache. It was several minutes before he looked up from the papers on his desk.

"Cadet Kirk, reporting as ordered, sir."

"Ah...yes." Kodos returned his gaze to the papers before him and selected one of them. "You are listed on the passenger manifest from the liner Leilian."

"Yes, sir."

"Cadet James T. Kirk," he read, "and a Cadet George S. Kirk."

"My brother," he volunteered before he realized he hadn't been asked.

"A cadet," he mused. "You are a long way from the Space Academy prep school!"

"Yes, sir," he nodded. "We've been participating in a student exchange program with the Arcturians and are returning home."

"Home." Kodos seemed lost in some private thoughts, far from whatever the immediate topic was. "I've not seen Earth in twenty of its years. How old are you, Cadet?"

"Sir, fourteen."

"I too was a cadet at that age, but times were different then." He left the desk, walked to what was apparently a bar, and filled a glass.

Kirk tried not to shift from one foot to the other displaying his nervousness--but tried in vain.

"At ease, Cadet."

He sighed mentally as he assumed the more comfortable stance. The man, drink in hand, walked around him and for some reason seemed to be surveying him.

"Sir, permission to speak," he began, breaking the silence.

"Granted."

"Apologies for my appearance, sir. We've been in transit for several days and then when..."

"It's not important," the man said. "Tell me, Cadet, what do your studies include? For what career are you planning?"

Why was he making small talk, Jim wondered. Why couldn't he get to the point so he and Sam could get out of that place? His mind brought forth a picture of Sam--*poor little brother*, he thought, *don't worry, I'm going to take care of this somehow, you'll see.* But Kodos was an old soldier so he didn't dare deviate from the accepted formalities. "I want to have my own ship" he said immediately upon realizing he hadn't answered yet, and then immediately sorry for the juvenile manner in which he did. He stared about feeling somewhat helpless.

"Such a goal takes much work and sacrifice. What are your interests, boy?"

"Sir, I'm presently involved in an extra-curricular course in the fundamentals of duotronics." He thought perhaps he should relax since the older man had ceased calling him 'Cadet' and referred to him informally. "And exploring," he added. "There is so much in space we haven't seen yet."

"Have you no personal interests, no hobbies?"

"Yes...sir. I've taken specialized training courses in physical education. I...I like to work out, sit, in a gym. And I've already completed the cadets' advanced martial arts requirements."

"Have you scars, boy?" he asked abruptly.

"Why...no, sir," he replied, desperately trying to cover his astonishment. He couldn't stand on formalities any longer. Perhaps the Governor was further on in years than he looked and his mind wandered. "Sir, I..."

"What about women?"

Women...girls. The question caught him even further off guard than the previous inquiries. *What on earth did the old fellow want to hear?* Even Jim was personally less delighted over the state than his inquirer would be if he was hoping for a good story since none existed nor any hope that there would ever really be one. "Well, sir, there's not much free time...I mean what with classes and training and..."

"Remove your shirt, boy."

Kodos was before him now, and Jim noticed the man was as tall as he. Fierce deepset eyes stared at him. Trying not to display the discomfort he felt he removed the tunic, and he told himself the room was really much warmer than it suddenly felt. What did he want, this made absolutely no sense at all. He really must be somewhere off the deep end, and that would explain what he was doing in charge of this godforesaken colony off the beaten path of every ship. Kodos suddenly came closer to him as he finished his drink. The gaze from his ominous eyes linger on Kirk, who hoped he wasn't visibly shuddering, for as irrational a sensation as it was, he felt it on his skin.

"Your muscles are very well-developed for your age," he said as he reached out and touched him, first his arms, then his shoulders, then across the chest. "Your brother--he resembles you?"

"Somewhat, sir, but he's younger than I. Some say I favor my father more than he does."

"I see."

Kodos touched him again, and the boy's mind whirled. Suddenly, what the Governor wanted became crystal clear and terrifying. His face betrayed his feelings.

"So?" the Governor nodded and walked back to his chair. "Put your shirt on, boy."

He sighed and obeyed, hoping there was a chance he was wrong.

"Lt. Schoenn will call for you tomorrow," Kodos told him, "and we will talk again. Think very carefully." He saluted the cadet who turned and left.

Kirk was surprised to find the same guard waiting outside the door and puzzled by the look he received from him. In silence he was returned to the cell and he gasped aloud in relief as he heard the door lock behind him.

He had just reached his sleeping pallet, his eyes yet unadjusted to the total darkness, when a presense beside him touched his arm. He flinched, memories surrounding him.

"Jim, what happened?" Sam's whisper seemed to cut the silence like a bugle blast but no one seemed to stir from their sleep. "Are we leaving, Jim?"

Oh, Lord, what can I tell him? "Not yet," he said, more tersely than he planned.

"Did you see the Governor?"

"No, but I have...I have an appointment with him tomorrow."

"Is that all they wanted, Jim?"

"Sure, Sam. Go back to sleep."

The presence disappeared and he laid down, fighting the nausea rising in his throat. He folded his arms tightly about him but he couldn't stop shaking.

In the morning, after an extremely sparse ration of food, everyone listened to the broadcast from the public address system. Everyone also followed it with total disbelief. The eloquent words hadn't camouflaged the truth. In order to insure the survival of anyone at all, by the power vested in him as military governor of Tarsus IV, Kodos was ordering the execution of what totaled half the population. The people in their room were all passengers from the Leilian and immediately began consoling themselves with the possibility that surely they would be spared. Jim Kirk, however, despaired that such a miracle was not fated to happen.

"He can't mean us, too, can he, Jim?" Sam asked, again. "When you talk to him today, he'll tell you, won't he?"

Jim nodded, feeling utterly helpless. "Probably, Sam, sure."

"Probably, Jim? You don't think he'll kill us, too?"

"Sam, don't worry, something will happen. The ship with the supplies is due any time now. You'll see." He didn't believe it but he hoped his brother would.

He sat in silence the rest of the day, with the exception of repeating similiar exchanges with Sam. Afternoon came, but without the usual ration of food, and dusk was approaching. Jim felt sure the absence of food would recur. He had remained, knees drawn up, trying to keep his mind totally blank. All night long he could find no answers and the hopelessness of the situation overwhelmed him as much as Kodos's intimations repulsed him. But night was coming and he knew he had to do something.

Saving the rest of the passengers was impossible, so he decided his duty lie in saving Sam, if he could, and then perhaps himself since he and his brother were all each other had. Inevitably, invariably, the only solution was apparent. He must accept Kodos' offer. Something inside his chest tightened at the mere fleeting thought and he shivered. *No, he thought, something will happen, the ship . . . the supply ship*

...will arrive when we're all dead, he told himself, that is the reality of the situation. We have no redeeming abilities, there is no reason to spare...this time tomorrow we will be dead...face it, you've got to face it, he told himself, there is only one way to possibly change that.

Oh, God...I can't. The cry was so loud within him he was sure everyone else heard it. I can't, I can't...You have to, something told him, reason it out, look at it from all sides. But how many sides were there?

The man's private practices were his own business and answerable only to his own conscience, everyone has that right. He knew that the revulsion he felt came largely from the programming of his own culture, for he had studied cultures in which such participation held no stigma whatsoever. But to be forced...to force anyone to...to force him to... *I can't, oh, God, I can't...But I don't want to die, I don't want to die. I don't want Sam to die, but I can't, I...*

...have to. Survival...I don't want to die here on this planet for nothing, and that is what it is, nothing, nothing except my own emotional reaction to this. I'll die, and so will Sam, unless I

Lt. Schoenn's appearance at the doorway shattered his reverie. He left Sam with the most hopeful and encouraging words he could muster, took a deep breath, and followed the soldier. They took a different maze of hallways this time, and he tried to force from his mind the reason why. Again the journey ended in a better section of the building. The soldier, in total silence this time, opened the door for him.

He entered what appeared to be a parlor or sitting room of some sort. Modestly decorated, it seemed opulent when compared to what he had just left.

Kodos entered the room from a door on its opposite side. Not in uniform, he wore a dressing gown of some sort and smoked a syntobac. The boy assumed attention immediately as the man approached him.

"You've considered," Kodos stated, instead of asking, casually. Before Kirk could answer, he continued. "You heard the proclamation this morning."

"Yes, sir."

"Cadet, due to the grave circumstances existent on Tarsus, you are classified as non-essential personnel. The disposition of such will begin in the morning."

"I'm not afraid to die."

"Death has such attractiveness to youth. Someone once said that youth is wasted on the young, and I quite agree. Your brother, the other Cadet Kirk, is also classified non-essential. You realize that."

He remained silent.

"You could save him," Kodos said simply, "and yourself."

Nausea flushed him again, and he choked it back. "How?" he asked, already knowing the answer.

"By doing as I tell you," he paused, "or as I ask you."

"What guarantee do you offer?" he asked, with more bravado than he felt.

"You dare..."

"No, sir," he snapped to attention, and then paused. He inhaled and forced his head to clear. There was a chance, after all, and he could save Sam, if the man kept his word. "I merely suggest that we arrange this compromise--as gentlemen."

The older man sighed, audibly bored yet he still seemed remarkably tense. "Go on."

"What is your offer?"

"You will be reclassified. You will live here, in my apartment, and you will not leave them. I see no reason to detail your other duties."

"And my brother?"

"I gave you my word."

"No...that's not enough." He paused to consider. He didn't want Sam brought directly into this but he had to make certain he would be kept alive. If he consented, and found out after that Sam had been...'disposed' with the already negligible half of the population...the idea was unthinkable. "There are a lot of rooms in this complex. You'll confine him, alone. He'll be rationed enough food. He'll be allowed to visit me daily."

The older man walked to the partially opened draperies and pointed to the window. He shook his head. "4000 people out there will die tomorrow, boy. I don't have to give you anything at all." A malevolent twinkle came to his eye. "How do you know I won't have you killed tomorrow?"

"I don't. But on the other hand you don't know that I won't kill you tonight."

"Very good. I like that." He approached him again. "But listen well. There will be no opportunity for vengeance on your part when this is done, when the Federation ship does get here. Whatever you say to denounce me will reflect on you, and on whatever career you're aspiring to in Star Fleet."

His ace in the hole vanished. In the back of his mind he had nurtured the fervent hope that when the ordeal passed he would see Kodos pay. Angrily, "It doesn't seem to have hurt yours any."

Kodos flushed angrily and raised his hand, but stopped the gesture in mid-air. "You'll pay for that, James Kirk. I think you know I can make you pay."

"Is it a bargain then? Sam's safety, as well as mine, for what you ask?" Dear, God, he thought, let's get this settled.

"It is agreed. In fact, to assure you, he will be put in quarters that can be observed on the telemonitor system. Now..."

"No," he snapped, "first Sam gets out of that hole."

"As you like. I have waited this long."

He pushed a button on his desk that evidently activated an intercom and spoke orders into it. Lt. Schoenn appeared moments later.

"This cadet will be my orderly now," he told the officer. He then handed him a sheet of paper on which he had been writing. "You will see that this is taken care of immediately. Dismissed, Lt."

Kodos left the desk again and went to the wallscreen monitor. He activated it and carefully focused the picture. In silence, Kirk watched his protesting brother being taken from the cell and led down hallways as he had been. He thought he recognized the area as he noted the change in decor. Sam was placed in a single small room, furnished with a simple cot and lavatory facilities, but at least it was clean.

"Is that the best you can do?" he asked Kodos.

"That depends on many things. On these co-ordinates you can observe him from here at any time. That is, if your gamble pays off." Kodos switched off the screen and walked toward the door from which he had entered the room. "I retire at this hour. You will...attend me." He opened the door and stood next to it.

Oh, god, oh, god, oh, god, oh, god, what am I going to...
Slowly, he walked into the bedroom and heard the door close behind him.

The next day Jim arranged to take the midday meal with Sam in the younger boy's quarters. He knew Lt. Schoenn would be watching on the telemonitor.

"Jim, I'm so glad to see you!" Sam beamed as his brother walked into the room. "What's happening, did you talk to the Governor? I didn't know what to do when they brought me here last night, I thought you'd be here soon but I must've fallen asleep waiting. What's happening?"

"One thing at a time," Jim said with a forced smile. He folded his arms and sat on the edge of the bunk.

"Well, did you talk to the Governor?"

"Yes..."

"Well, come on, what's..." His face was suddenly crest-fallen as he stared at him. Slowly he shook his head. "Oh, no, Jim, he didn't..."

"It's all right, Sam," he said suddenly. "Don't worry. We've been...er...reclassified."

The younger boy's body sagged with relief. Jim thought he saw tears welling in his eyes.

"I told you," he continued, "as soon as he learned about our situation, he took care of things. After all, we're prep cadets, we're going to the Academy in another few years, there wasn't anything to worry about."

Sam clasped his hands together nervously. "It's terrible out there, Jim. All those people dying, for almost no reason at all. Life's not fair, Jim, and that's such a pitiful statement even if it is true." He seemed to force a grin. "Are they going to move us again? There's only one bed in here, Jim."

"I...I have my own quarters, Sam, but I'll see you, don't worry."

"Why, Jim?"

"I...the Governor had a job for me and I have to live somewhere else. He...he said he'd try to find something for you, too."

A knock at the door announced the arrival of food. Still a meager fare, Jim noticed, but was somehow consoled by the fact that the best hadn't been kept for the chosen few. Fortunately Sam failed to notice his brother had no appetite. Jim stood looking out the small window into the courtyard below, noting the periodic movement of groups of armed soldiers, then turned back to Sam. *One day at a time*, he told himself, *that's the only way. The supply ship has to arrive soon...it has to...* Sam was talking to him but he wasn't listening. This would end, and even though he knew he could never make Kodos pay, he consoled himself with two thoughts. Sam was safe, and when it was over he was going to bury it so far into his memory...he would force himself to forget it, he'd drive it from his mind any time it tried to creep back, he'd forget...

But that was for the future, if and when it came. Now he had to prepare to face tonight and all the following nights, until it did. *Tonight*, he shuddered, *tonight...oh, my God...*

Chantal awoke suddenly and looked around only briefly before realizing what had disturbed her sleep. Bathed in sweat, Jim's body convulsed and twitched next to her. He was talking, or trying to, though she couldn't discern any distinct words. She had known him to have restless nights before but nothing so violent as this that she was actually afraid to be beside him.

Carefully, she put a hand to his shoulder, and her touch seemed to enrage him.

"Jim...Jim..." she shook him gently, then more firmly since his fitfulness increased. "Jim, wake up...please...you're dreaming...Jim..."

She pushed him flat against the bed with all her might and began to wrestle her back, still encased in sleep. "Jim, you've got to wake up, Jim..." At a complete loss, she slapped him across the face and the sound echoed off the walls. She thought it was terribly melodramatic but it seemed to work. He ceased to fight but the incoherent groaning continued, and then he seemed to sign and began to wake. She eased her body off his and managed to get her arm about his shoulders. He rubbed his eyes, looked around and then at her.

"I'm sorry...you were dreaming, having a nightmare," she said. "I couldn't wake you."

Oh, God. He sighed audibly.

"It's all right," she said softly, "it was just a dream. We're together now." The cool touch of her hands eased him into her embrace and he yearned to relax. "Do you want to talk about it?"

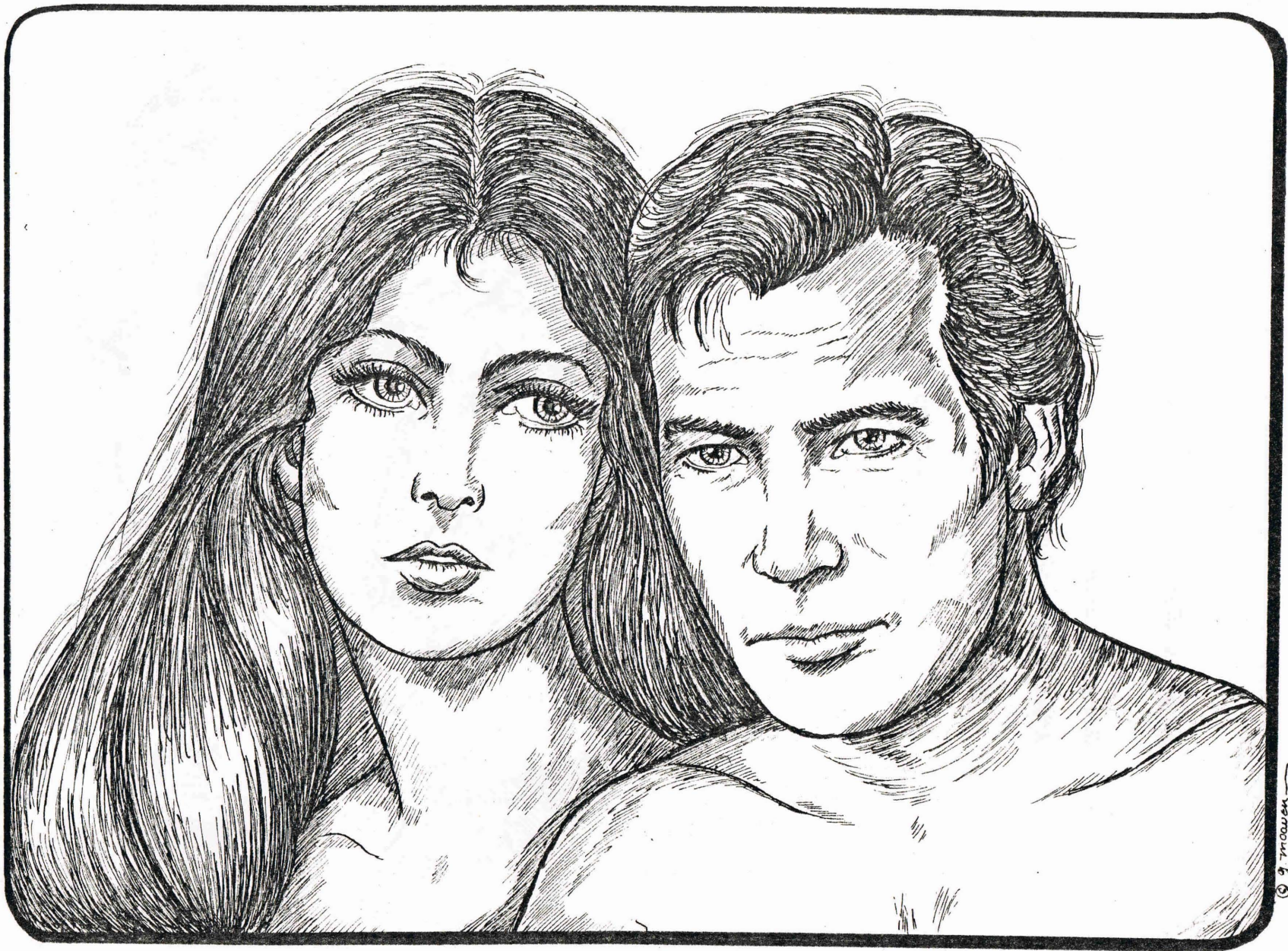
"No." He was infinitely sorry for being so abrupt with her. But, oh God, they've come back. The nightmares had stopped since the first night Chantal had shared his bed. He had thanked all the gods he could think of, as well as her presence, and her love, for that. But he realized now that he always knew there would be no freedom or escape from them.

"As you wish," she said, still cradling him to her, her hands still stroking his face. "It's all right now," she purred softly as though to a child, "it was only a dream."

Oh, God, Chantal, how can I ever tell you what I...oh, God, oh God...

Again he told himself, as he had done so many times before that he'd lost count, that what he did was not his fault. He didn't want to do it, he didn't enjoy it...no, not ever. It was all in the past, it was over. It was something he had to do. That was unpleasant at the time but that was often a soldier's lot and it was over years ago. Years ago...like it or not, he did it, and that would stay with him always.

After a time her own breathing regulated itself, assuring him that she was asleep. He couldn't hold back any longer, and the warmth and comfort in her voice, her love, and her embrace did nothing for any stern resignation he had left. In her sleeping arms, he sobbed, for the second time in more than as many decades.



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APRÈS UN RÊVE

Not to be alone

After dreams that scorch the soul...

What more can man ask?

--Cheryl Rice



THE FEAR OF YOU, AND THE DREAD

--Annelaurie Logan

She said, surprised, "But the Tellerites *love* animals!"

"Boiled, fried, or in stews," he agreed. Kevin O'Riley, sitting next to the New Danaen linguist and across the table from the argumentative crewman, put a protective arm around her shoulders and glared at the man. The Danaen was short, chubby, and red-headed--exceptionally red-headed. O'Riley had spotted the hip-long waves of her copper-bright hair and immediately volunteered himself as her private guide to the wonders of the *Enterprise*. He suspected his fellow of ulterior motives--the same ulterior motives *he* had been entertaining when he brought her to the rec room for a drink.

"The Tellerites would scorn to eat animals! They say that is what makes Terran beasts so unsympathetic, that we treat them kindly and then slaughter them." The tiggy leashed to the broad belt around her waist climbed into O'Riley's lap and chirred happily at him; she leaned a little against his arm. Reassured, he glared at the intruder even more furiously.

"It's wonderful people that the Tellerites must be, if such a lovely lady puts her faith in them," he announced. "I'd be willing to forget more than a few spaceway rumors and travellers' tales if she told me they were trustworthy." He rather hoped the loud oaf would take that as a challenge; he'd seen him working out in the gym and was sure he could easily take him down.

But Megan O'Connor smiled at him. "Yes, they are very nice, but I would forgive any hard words you called them, because they do not say good things of the Federation-men either." She gulped her drink and stood. "Show me more of this ship, Kevin? Such wonderful stories you tell!"

"....making up to a bunch of dumb animals!" the crewman finished--he had carried on valiantly through her speech, though her speech, though he knew neither she nor O'Riley would listen. "Goddamned mutant PETS!"

"The inhabitants of 2256 Jackson Three are not 'pets'; nor is the *Enterprise* opening diplomatic relations with them." O'Riley winced; he hadn't heard Mr. Spock come up behind them, but he could guess what the Science Officer wanted. Confirming his worst fears, Spock added, "Ms. O'Connor, if you are free, there are certain discrepancies in the report...."



Megan patted Kevin's arm, beaming, and announced cheerfully, "With-your-permission? Thank you, foraverynicetime, and I hope I see you soon-again." She grabbed him as he stood sullenly, kissed him violently, and added, "Is that right? I do not know your ways as correctly as I wish to."

O'Riley could only nod breathlessly as she skipped after Mr. Spock, the fat little tiggy spinning squeaking in mid-air at the end of its leash.

But in the elevator she winced, and her pet used all four short-thumbed paws to climb down its tether and onto her shoulder, making little comforting sounds as it played with her hair. The first of the New Danaen ships had left Earth more than four hundred years ago; and none of them, not even the new models, used gravity simulation. The belts Megan and her pet wore contained tiny anti-drive units; without them she could not have survived long, for she had been conceived and raised in freefall, and even the tiny weight increment and directional shifts of the intership capsule upset her sensitive balance systems.

But Dr. McCoy's lab equipment delighted her almost as much as the tiggy delighted Bones. She scanned medical records competently as the gold-furred semisentient with the dark mask and paws lashed its ringed tail around the doctor's neck and chirped interrogatively.

"Math's ancestors we developed from what you call lemurs," she remarked absently. "How much was unshielded radiation, or null-gravity, or from inadequacies in the cycling system, and how much was the work of the First New Danaens, we know no longer." She considered her last sentence. "English is strange! However it may have been, now both our species are telepathic symbiotes. Because of the tiggies, and because we were willing to learn their language --comparatively it is no harder than our Crypto-Gael, allowing for the aspirated glottals--the Tellerites became friendly with us."

"(Easy on that *ear*, little fella.) I hear the Tellerites are real fine geneticists," Dr. McCoy said, pulling Math free. "What was it, dogs?, they have on this mudball we're cruising for?"

"And why Earth animals?" Captain Kirk demanded.

"Terra has more domesticated beasts than any other planet of similar conditions. The Tellerites' planet has only one more species of warm-blooded animal, and they are symbiotic also. Therefore the Tellerites are fascinated by the concept of tame but non-aware mammals, and love to work with them; their successes they seed on planets without native sentients, such as 2256 Jackson."

Math had tired of the good doctor, and was catapulting lightly from McCoy's shoulder to Megan's head, and back to McCoy. As he leaped again, his abstracted mistress spun to face Spock, and the furry beastling's momentum carried him in a wide arc that intersected neatly with Kirk's head. The tiggy's squalls cut off suddenly as he realized that the Captain did not appreciate being used as a mooring.

His companion about-faced and twitched him back to her arm expertly. "And yes, Doctor, they are reputedly dogs, or their forebears were dogs: big dogs, I think, or there would not have been room enough for a sentient brain. Terran dogs are genetically plastic, they adapt to new demands quickly."

"The fungi mentioned in the Starfleet report on the drug smugglers," Spock said, "seems to be identical to that used as the source of the mutational agent favored by the Tellerites."

McCoy snorted. "Mutate your mind, right? Won't be the first time a good thing was misused by fools. Watch them declare it illegal--make it hard on the researchers and easy for the criminals."

"It's a native mushroom for the Tellerites, they get nothing from it themselves. The extract they make stimulates chromosome breakage and recombination." Megan explained. "An earlier stage of the purification will cause hallucinations and sensory distortion in certain other races, but it is not the invention of the Tellerites, nor would they sell it so. They told us--the New Danaens--that it was outlaw Terrans made the drug and sold it, because it creates pretty dreams and ugly addicts. They only want to learn if it causes DNA damage in the users."

"Let me get this clear," Kirk said patiently. "We're going to a planet ruled by intelligent pets to clean up a mushroom - smuggling ring because the bloody Tellerites refuse to deal with the mess they've made for themselves. And we can't even land on the damned planet because of some weird taboo--"

"The inhabitants of 2256 Jackson Three are not...." Spock began, trailing off in distaste as Megan O'Connor fell to the floor shrieking with helpless laughter.

It was the no-contact injunction that irked the Captain --and Starfleet Command--most. After transporting an "ambassador" halfway across the quadrant at Warp Six, he expected a warmer welcome. Eventually, grudgingly, after long hours of untranslatable multi-lingual chatter between Megan, her shipworld mates, and the Tellerite representatives,

(for the inhabitants of the disputed planet did not choose to make themselves known--did not, or could not), one officer from the *Enterprise* was allowed to beam down. One officer, preferably non-human, and at least mildly telepathic: Mr. Spock was, as he said, the most logical choice. With the linguist of New Dana and her symbiote, he was beamed down to the planet, carrying a week's worth of supplies and a great deal of signalling equipment.

"I wish it were easier to pinpoint the natives," Megan said sourly, squinting into a sunlight so bright it seemed artificial. "I wish these were not criminals and dangerous men we have to investigate. And while I am wishing," she finished, "I wish that the Federation had never left Terra, and that I were at home in bed."

They stood almost waist-deep in a plain of some plant resembling long grass. About a hundred yards in any direction, the plain ended and a forest began, dark trees rising in a good approximation of a perfect circle, gleaming in the harsh light. This was the topography of the entire planet: greater and lesser ovals of long grass scattered liberally through tight forest, with only the innumerable lakes and tributaries interrupting the pattern of green on green. The single land mass, they knew, stretched in a wide band around the equator, dividing the matching expanse of ocean in two. It was a wonderful planet for a race of sentient but non-manipulative carnivores and totally unsuitable for the purposes of most human occupations: the soil was thin, easily eroded, and hostile to non-native plants; there were no exploitable mineral deposits; none of the local fauna was distinctive enough to attract the exotics traders; and it was off the normal travel routes.

(The Tellerites had expanded on its unique advantages at some length. They were proud of their coordination, and they distrusted the Federation's intentions).

Math complained as the antigravity units in his belt strove to compensate for the slightly greater pull. Protesting he climbed to the highest available perch, atop Spock's pack, and planted himself whining. The Vulcan, busy with his tricorder, said only, "The encampment we are to investigate is almost an hour's walk to the northwest. Several life forms which might be the transplanted sentients are--"

He did not have to indicate direction; a yell of agony came from the very edge of the surrounding forest, and Megan immediately ran towards it. Spock, less certain, more wary, but better able to cope with the encumbering grass, moved effortlessly after and past her, and reached its source first.

It was a huge grey wolfhound, nearly the size of Megan, its foreleg shattered in a crude but effective saw-toothed trap. The hound screamed again, staring at Spock, screamed and threw itself painfully away from him, dragging the mangling trap to the limits of the heavy chain pegging it down. Spock stood, holding his phaser uncertainly, trying to find some alternative that would not be misunderstood by the injured beast. His teammate brushed past him, calling the hound in the grunted gutturals of the Tellerite language. The Vulcan sheathed his weapon hastily as several grey shapes faded in and out of the shadows of the trees, shapes as indistinct as the shadows themselves. The hound in the leghold subsided, panting, exhausted, but the strange shadows were gone again.

Slowly Megan moved to the injured beast, crooning as she inched forward; it watched her with great dark eyes set in a disturbingly broad domed skull. Math crept beside her, his chirping at the upper edge of the audible range, his handlike paws clutching at stems and rootlets to hold himself at ground level. After some experimentation, she found a setting on her emergency medical kit that would produce intelligible readings; she shook her head as it finished.

"We can't repair it here. If I were a surgeon, or my companion....but we are not gifted enough."

The edge of a telepathic signal seemed to brush across Spock's mind, disappearing before he could open to it. Megan seemed to understand: she oriented toward the area where the shadows had appeared, one hand still resting gently on the wounded dog's side.

"NO," she said, shocked; listened again, and seemed about to argue, when some new signal or sound jerked her to her feet. Turning to Spock, she said in a subtly different voice, "Your gun. Shoot him."

"To stun?" he asked. He doubted that, and knew his first impulse had been correct when tears came to her eyes.

"The outlaws want him to experiment on. Don't you hear them crashing down on us? Shoot him and let's get out of here." She jerked the phaser away from him, clicked the setting all the way over, and fired blindly in the general direction of the crippled hound; but it was enough and more than enough. The dog and the trap were vaporized, and the ground beneath started to fuse in the fraction of an instant before she snapped it off again. Blindly, the tiggy shivering on her shoulder, she charged into the forest, motioning Spock to follow. He heard the labored buzzing of a landcar picking its way through the trees as he followed her resignedly. There was very little ground cover; it was the

black slowly-shifting shadows that concealed them. Megan led Spock in a gradual curve at an angle to the intruders' car: as he came up beside her he realized that her eyes were tightly shut, leaking tears, and that only the instructions of her invisible friends kept her safe. For the few hours until darkness fell, he let her lead, occasionally freezing in a patch of black as some sound or search alerted the grey beasts he thought he caught glimpses of flanking them through the dappled semi-darkness.

When the shadows began to blur and blend with the sun's sinking, she seemed to be released to her own mind. Still silent, she and Spock cleared a campsite and started a fire against a night as black as the day had been bright. Only as they ate did Spock ask, "There was no other way?"

"The Hounds say no other. Did you?"

He was aware of several, but did not speak of them. "It would appear that the Hounds fear the smugglers unduly. Or is it all humanoids?"

"They have their reasons; you saw the trap, there are worse things spread in the forest, though only under special circumstances are they caught." She cradled Math, feeding him the remnants of her supper as he finished his own.

"Special circumstances," Spock thought, "circumstances such as the landing of two humanoids on a beam of light. We were the cause of his death."

He shook his head. There was something he could remember--something important about...the dogs? If this was an attempt to contact him...

Spock sat staring at the flames, waiting for the touch of alien minds, nibbling on a mushroom pulled from the perimeter of the campsite.

Nibbling on a mushroom...in the last shocked second of lucidity, he realized he had been tricked. His head swum, and he thought the flames leaped up on a roaring whirlwind of red light. Megan beside him said, "Prideful. Crawl inside your own self-pity like a maggot in a rotten fruit, and despise your fellows." Or did he only imagine she spoke? "We are all of us strangers, Mr. Spock, aliens in a world we did not choose. We travel down to the darkness with strangers for our only companions, and at the end we die alone."

"I am hallucinating," he told himself, "I was tricked into taking an organic substance known to produce hallucinations and sensory distortion in certain races. Was it the Hounds? Or Megan O'Connor? She blames me--she hates me because I am the Federation here. The fire stinks of mushrooms. Do the mushrooms make it so blue? I sit here with an alien who hates me, and all around are the Hounds..."



Gradually he realized he was running, crashing through the velvet darkness desperately. *"This is illogical, I can not escape in the darkness, their eyes follow me on little points of flame."*

He heard the woman calling after him, but it was a trap, she meant to catch him in a cruel steel mouth and burn him to vapor. *"This is illogical. I am....I am..."*

The Hounds were following him, hunting him down. The sky lit up and a siren howled as a dog with flaming eyes leaped at his throat and dragged him down into the darkness.

The light was blurred and indistinct when he awoke; sunrise, he thought, till the perceptible lengthening of the fading shadows proved that he had slept out the day and back to sunset. He was stretched under a tree, his mouth dry, his uniform torn, his pack and his comrades gone--still, his person was undamaged except for random bruises such as one would expect after a panicked run through absolute darkness and woodland. Remembering his last memory, he sat up and checked his side automatically: phaser he still had, but the communicator and tricorder had been lost or abandoned, he could not remember which. Ruefully he wondered whether to strike back for the campfire, to wait out the six-hour darkness where he was, or to orient by the dying sun and move on the drug-runners' headquarters.

While he considered, one of the huge Hounds appeared silently from the shadows, a Hound with a furry bundle in its jaws. As it set the feebly mewling lump gently on the ground ten feet in front of him, Spock saw it was Megan's tiggy. Math, beltless, Megan-less, dying in the heavy gravity, crawled painfully towards him. The Hound stood gravely, waiting.

Spock wondered if the hallucinations had begun again, but he picked up the tiggy and probed uncertainly for its mind, his long fingers enfolding the round little skull completely. He caught brief confused impressions of relief and pain and terror. An image of himself as seen by Math: part officer, part alien, part dim memories of the sleek felines feared by the beastling's lemur ancestors. He focused on that and succeeded.

"--Bite off band...teeth hurt."

The little animal was struggling with concepts its vocabulary did not cover.

"--Bad ones come with machines - wear bands." ("Skimmers," Spock supplied, "flying craft"), "make light make noise have hurt-machines," (sudden picture of a handgun). "Spock not there, Spock go before fast away, with big tiggies." The little brain divided living creatures into Ones [humanoid], Tiggies [intelligent non-humanoids] and Others; Spock decided; the "big tiggies" must be the great grey hounds.)

"--Where is Megan? Where is your mistress, your One?"

Of course, she would not let the tiggy wander alone and in pain; unless she were captive, or...

The tiggy keened wretchedly. "--Dead, dead, the bad ones' hurt-machines come! Math bite band, fall down, Math go to Spock but Big Tiggy take Math fast. Megan dead, because bad ones!"

Calmer, it finished. "--Big Tiggies go to bad ones with Spock now, all bad ones die, Spock help. Hand push Math down, down, Math hurt."

Math was dying, Spock saw, and he had nothing to help it. If the beastling died, there would be no way to contact the Hounds, no way to find his communicator and contact the ship. Nothing on the planet would care if Spock lived or died. No one would know whether he failed or if he succeeded. He blamed the sudden irrational fear in his soul on the lingering effects of the hallucinogen; called it an illusion, and knew it did not matter what he called it.

"--Math die. Math go to Megan?"

He knew nothing of the theology of the New Danaans, but Spock found himself hoping that Math would somehow, impossibly, be reunited with his feckless, fearless companion.

"--To Megan,--" he agreed. The abused tiggy sighed, settled--and its mind stopped. As the night fell in the woods, a longer night fell across the firefly intelligence connected to Spock; but something infinitely brighter spark-ed and grew. Another mind, another and greater awareness: the lone Hound had been patiently standing all the while Spock "talked" with the little pet. He stepped forward gravely, close to invisible in the absolute and starless dark, and touched the chilling body with his nose. Spock had not believed what the Tellerites said of these dogs' intelligences; even with the calm and brilliant presence of this Hound's mind intimately linked to his own, he did not quite believe. But there was little hope left here, and he reached out mentally with what a non-Vulcan would have called a shrug.

"--Can you hear me, Hound?"

"--We have heard every one of your thoughts since you landed on the planet. We called, but you did not listen; even when we bent together and--persuaded--you to eat the hallucinogen, you did not hear when we spoke."

"--Why did you not come into the open before us?"

"--We feared you; you do not look or smell like THEM, but your thoughts are very similar. Physically, your companion could have been one of THEM, but her mind had far less of a likeness to THEIRS. Also, she had the little beast. They heard us."

"--It does not seem to have done them much good." Spock regretted that comment almost immediately, but the Hound was not offended--regretful, but not offended.

"--She went up to them, up to their guns. She was very trusting...as if she had never learned to fear that which she did not understand."

Spock thought of the New Danaan ships, cruising unarmed through a hostile universe, relying on their insignificance and their openness to protect them. There had always been a facet to his mind that secretly despised them for that peculiar brand of courage: *"--That is why,"* he thought to himself, *"I am a Federation officer instead of a Vulcan scientist."*

"--Will you help us? Will you lead us against THEM?"

The Hound respected his musings, but it wanted something practical. Listening through him, Spock could tell that dozens of the big grey monsters waited just outside his awareness. Both mentally and physically, he could feel the path to the renegade's center, he could see the shape and size and protections of the enclave. Only a dog, a mutated pet, but a dog with a mind both brilliant and clear. It was a strange image he got from the beast: pictures in grey and black, myopic, but magnificently fleshed with scent and sound.

"--I am called Lann," it announced calmly. The image of a long sword, glinting light, came to Spock. It was not something the Hound had ever seen, but a memory retained from an insentient ancestral past.

"--Lann, I am honored." And he was, honored, and touched, for the hound had a mind as intelligent as his own, if greatly different in kind. *"--I am...but was he Spock, Commander in the Federation? Translating his Vulcan name, the name he had not used for so many, many years, he finished, "--I am Mountain Cat. And I think I am still under the influence of that mushroom. Lann--Grey Brother--"*

but that is from a book in my childhood--perhaps I am no longer sane." He knew the thought should terrify him, would have terrified Spock, but he felt only an odd sense of relief, of freedom. "--Why have you not disposed of THEM before?"

"--We feared THEM, are THEY not dangerous? We feared you, even, who was not very like them except in mind. But now THEY must be destroyed, or we will be overrun: you will lead us, and (suddenly fierce) we will not be afraid."

There was a carnivorous overtone to Lann's thoughts, and to his own'also, Spock realized.

"--I am definately insane now. I do not care. We will let in the jungle, Brother Lann."

Spock never forgot that night; never decided if he had been, indeed, insane. It was over an hour's travel to the outlaw's encampment, time loping through the dark over terrain he knew, it seemed, intimately, though he did not see, but heard and smelt and mind-sensed it. He ran confidently through the invisible darkness, surrounded by hoary beings with the shape of beasts and the minds of men. Sometime one or another would emerge from the outer limits of his awareness, pacing him temporarily, and he would recognize them swiftly, without shock and without fear. This was Singing Bird, that Swift Fang, and this one Runs-Before....

Occasionally as they ran, one or another would howl; a second would pick up the note, and soon all would be joyously baying the hunt and the satisfaction to come at the end of it. The little insentient beasts, the meat creatures, heard the singing and were afraid; they cowered in den and hollow all around and under the pack, but it was not food they hunted tonight. Dim sparks of startled awareness, smelling of fear and surprise, ran from their periphery; confused predators stopped and shifted from their trail; and the only sameness was the scent of the earth below and trees above as they ran.

Finally they came to the camp, to the electronic nerve-net shielding it--a nerve net invisible to humans, but glaringly obvious to the Hounds, and to Spock with them. A hypnotized guard, dazed under the combined weight of the pack's many strong minds, cut the power out, and they ran across it, unharmed.

And then came the time of blood, the cleansing, the retribution, as grey shadows pulled down unsuspecting individuals, hunted out the buildings and the alleys and the corridors. One by one, in small groups, the outlaws, the



intruders, died. There was no defense; there was no resistance. Very few of them were armed here in camp, and fewer cried out as they died, so swiftly did the Hounds bring them down. Before dawn, every human on the planet was dead. And Spock came back into stunned awareness, staring at the blood on his hands in horror.

He was an officer of the Federation; he was a Vulcan and non-violent, he was...Spock. The grey beasts avoided him as they slunk swiftly back to the forest. Only one last call crossed his mind as he stood frozen in the corridor, staring at the torn bodies all around him.

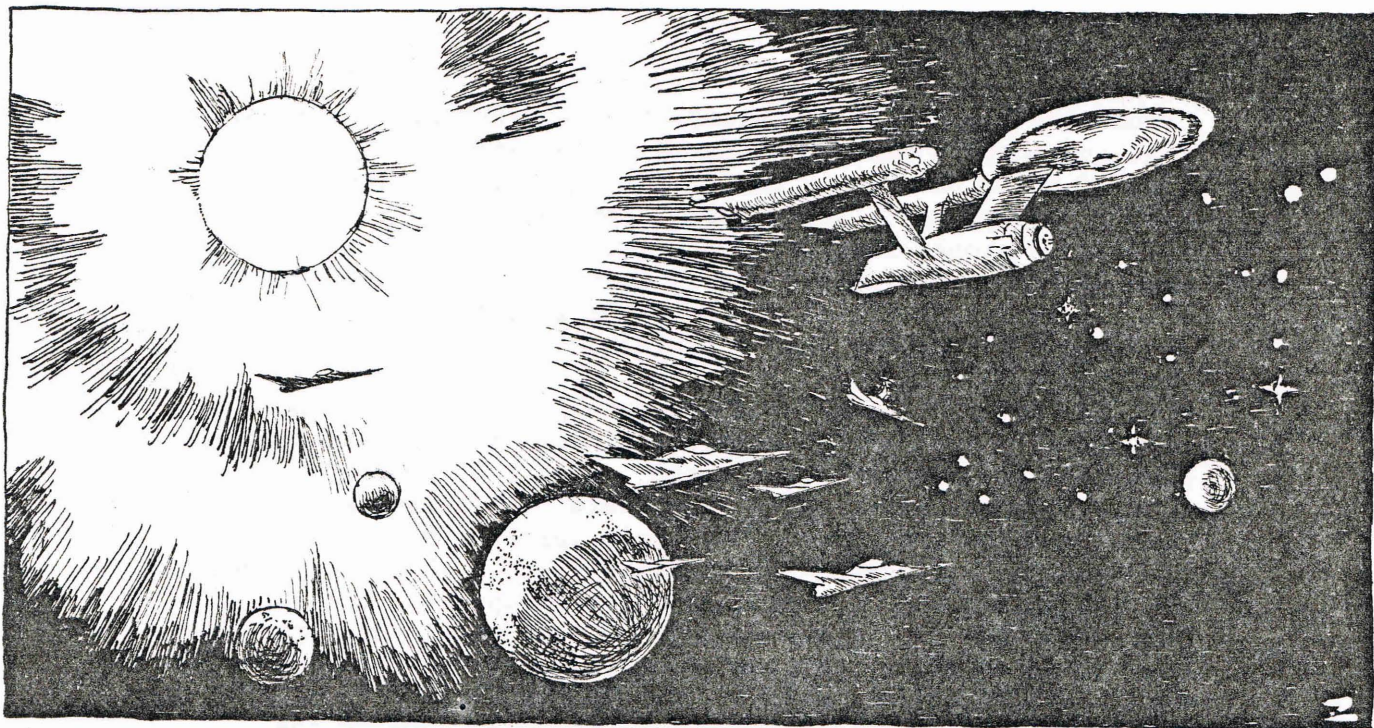
"--Farewell, Mountain Cat--Mr. Spock. Your small communicator is outside this building. One of the others found it, back on your trail in the woods."

"--Lann?"

The shadows were gone.

On the *Enterprise*, he claimed he could not remember what had happened after the Hounds tricked him. He refused to speculate on the massacre of the smugglers when a cautious exp. team beamed down to the emptied encampment. Until the day of his death he would deny, even to himself, the reality of his participation, his communion with the beasts without and the beasts within. But after the slower New Danaan ship finally arrived to recover the bodies of Megan and Math, he looked for a passage he vaguely remembered in the sacred tome some of his crewmen called The Book. There he found the words of the Terran's God:

And God...said to them, "...The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea"



NEVER ENOUGH DARK

--Cheryl Rice

"Jim, you've got to get this ship out of here soon or none of us are going to make it." The Chief Medical Officer of the *Enterprise* spoke with uncharacteristic vehemence, all traces of his southern drawl absent.

"Bones, we can't use the warp engines as long as we have tractor beams on those transports out there. And we can't get the transporters working to get those people off the transports and we can't get them working until we're out of range of that damned star and..." The Captain of the *Enterprise* broke off as he realized his voice was rising in a very non-regulation wail.

His tone of voice was not the only non-regulation factor involved in the current crisis. Of course, most crises are not known for their adherence to rules and regulations, man made or otherwise, but even so this one was exceptional. To start things off, Kirk's precious ship was ridiculously overloaded with almost a thousand refugees from the fourth planet of the Deira II star system; so full that the decks were awash with a flood of living flesh. Human and humanoid

colonists, along with a contingent of non-humanoid natives, that had somehow managed to survive the partial disintegration of their previously benign sun, now filled almost every inch of the vessel. All areas except the bridge were jammed, which made proper running of the *Enterprise* almost impossible. Many of the unwilling passengers were sick or injured and to add a final dismal touch to the situation, the natives could not digest any of the ship's available store of food.

The logical thing for the starship to do, then, would have been to head to the nearest starbase for assistance at maximum warp. Two things, however, made this course of action at least momentarily impossible. The first was that some survivors had managed, in their desperation, to lift off from the surface of the doomed planet in ships that were barely spaceworthy. Several of these dilapidated vessels were now under tow by the *Enterprise* and, until their passengers could be brought aboard or until they were out of range of the deadly radiation from the unfaithful star, they could not be abandoned without dooming 200 people. Due to the power drain caused by the tractor beams the starship could not go into warp drive without damage to the di-lithium crystals. The second reason for not departing the area for immediate help was that no one was really sure just where that help was located. Subspace communications were out until they gained some distance from the source of the radiation that was threatening to take all their lives and for the same reason navigation was also very uncertain.

"You're going to have to decide very soon," McCoy was returning to the main point of the discussion, "cause these people are in bad shape and we don't begin to have the facilities to treat all of them. I've got cases of radiation sickness like I've never seen before. Some of the crew were injured when they went down to help organize the evacuation and we just can't go on like this much longer--we're all falling apart. I'll bet you haven't had any sleep in two days...you look horrible!"

"Actually it's been three and you aren't a picture of loveliness yourself, you know." Kirk was right. The Doctor, wearily slumped in a chair in his normally quiet office, looked for once far older than his years. His pleasant face was haggard, the bags under his eyes looking like huge blisters that had been drained without breaking the skin. And the scene around the two officers was not one to raise anyone's morale. Sickbay was completely inundated with prone bodies in various stages of disrepair. All the beds had been filled days earlier, so the nurses had spread blankets on the floor for the other patients until it looked like a wall-to-wall carpet of unhappy, sick people. The medical teams stepped gingerly around their patients, doing what little they could to alleviate their suffering. "Just give me

something to keep me going for a while longer," the Captain continued, "I've got to go find out how engineering is coming along with those transporters."

"Nothing doing, you've been on stimulants for two days now. You've got to get some sleep." McCoy gazed at his commanding officer with the eyes of a friend as well as those of a doctor. He knew Kirk would never admit it, but the strain of the last few days was evident in the man and the next few promised to be no easier. "Go lay down somewhere, if only for a few hours. Do you all the good in the world." He belatedly realized that last statement didn't quite apply in their situation but decided to ignore the fact. He was far past worrying himself about details.

"Bones, there isn't anyplace to lay down...not even if I could right now. All the crew's quarters are full of Deirans. The only place that's clear is the bridge and I couldn't sleep there."

"Why not? You're going to drop somewhere if you keep up like you have been much longer. Take a blanket and go up there. Curl up on the floor. Everybody else has been doing just that." The last was quite literally true.

"No," Kirk hesitated--he didn't know how to explain his reasons to the highly unmilitary doctor. "It wouldn't look right...be bad for discipline. Look...I'll go see Scotty, then I'll try to find someplace. I really am kind of tired..."

Neither man could seem to find anything to fill the glum silence that followed this admission.

"Wait..." the younger man continued after a moment's further thought, "I'm almost sure there isn't anyone in Spock's quarters. These people can't take the heat in there and I'll bet no one has bothered to change the life support controls to cool it off yet. It won't bother me all that much for a few hours; I'll rig it to come down to ship normal and in a few hours, after I get that sleep you want, we can put some of these people in there." Kirk finished the outline of his plan rather triumphantly--proud of such clear thinking under the circumstances. However, it didn't seem to find much favor with his companion.

"Spock! Don't talk to me about that...that Vulcan! After what he said yesterday I don't care if I never hear anything else about that cold blooded, pointy-eared..." McCoy sputtered off into a series of highly uncomplimentary remarks as a nurse motioned for him to come into the other room. "You can say all you want about it being logical, Jim, but I call it just plain disgusting!" The angry surgeon rose to see what help he could be to their unlucky passengers. Over his shoulder he reminded the Captain, who was still

rather precariously perched on the corner of an overloaded desk, "He would have let half these people die, because his computer told him it would have been the wisest course to follow. Disgusting...just plain disgusting!"

Kirk stood up and not without trouble made his way to the door leading to the corridor. "Well, call it what you want, but he may have been right after all." He opened the door manually, necessary due to a malfunction somewhere in the miles of circuits that governed such things, and left the overburdened medical department to its rather futile tasks.

The Captain set out on what he knew could be a long trip to the engineering deck. Half the turbo elevators were out, and the others worked only sporadically. Life support systems were using far more than their usual share of power, causing overloads all over the ship. His fatigue walked along with him as an almost visible companion. Kirk tried to shake off the numbing weariness that dragged at him--he had too much to do to give in to it. Wryly, he thought that if the ship couldn't go into warp drive soon, they would all have the opportunity for a very long rest indeed. But what about the people on those little ships out there that were depending on him? Then another thought assailed his desperately tired brain; what about the *Enterprise* herself? Didn't she have first claim on her Captain?

As he trudged down the curving corridor, passing the now mostly sleeping throngs, he could feel a command decision coming on like a migraine.

A short while later he knew that decision was even closer than he had thought. Scott had convinced him that there was no hope of escape while the extra power drain continued. They were reasonably safe as long as the radiation level didn't rise dramatically. If, however, the star suddenly went nova, which there was a good chance it would soon do, they would all die, some more quickly than others, an equally horrible death.

Kirk punched the intercom button on the engineering communications console.

"Bridge. Uhura here." Somehow, in spite of the situation, she managed to look much the same as usual, coolly efficient.

"Tell Mr. Spock I want a readout on when the computer says that star is going to blow completely." He didn't especially want to talk to his first officer. "I'll be in

engineering a while longer. Kirk out."

He started to leave, but stopped at the Lt.'s rather hesitant, "Er...Captain? Mr. Spock isn't on the bridge right now. Mr. Sulu has the conn."

Kirk turned back to the viewer, surprised--it was unlike Spock to absent himself from the bridge during even a minor emergency, much less during one of the present magnitude. "What the..." He caught himself in time. Now was not the time to let his temper get away from him. "When did he go and where is he?" Try as he would the last part of the sentence did not emerge in his normal tone of voice. If he couldn't count on Spock...

"He left about twenty minutes ago, sir. I think he was going to his quarters. He did say that he had just thought of something and that he would return soon."

"All right, Lt., have Mr. Chekov cover the science station and get that information for me." Kirk paused, thinking hard for a moment but his overworked mind refused to supply him with any hint as to what the Vulcan might be doing. "I was going to Spock's quarters anyway so I'll talk to him there."

As Uhura's rather startled face faded from the view-screen, he realized that he was more exhausted than he had believed. Normally he would never have let on that there was anything strange in Spock's behavior. Command image was all important. He rubbed his bloodshot eyes, knowing that rest was now an ever receding mirage, and decided to go see what the Science Officer was doing that he considered to be more important than his duties on the bridge. Whatever it was, it had better be good.

"Scotty, I'm going to go talk to Spock. Get those things working...otherwise a lot of people are going to die. And some of them will be us..."

"Aye Captain, it's a hard fact to face."

Kirk walked slowly to the door and paused, as if afraid to tackle the job of pushing past all those people between him and his destination. Just as he decided that there was nothing to be gained by waiting, Scott's low, sad voice stopped him.

"I hate to say it, but Mr. Spock was right. We never should have decided to put those people on the hangar deck... if only we had it to use now..." his voice trailed off wistfully.

"We didn't decide, Scotty," his Captain reminded him, "I did."

And as Kirk stood in the miraculously working elevator, he knew that was the truth. In the frenzied activity of the evacuation, more beings were suddenly on the starship than there was room for. Someone, no one ever remembered who, suggested that the hangar bay be used. It seemed a good idea at the time until Spock and his computers discovered that there was a 77.436% chance that in such an operation the normal use of that facility would be vital to the well-being of the ship. By that time the deck was full of intelligent beings and to return it to a state of operational readiness would have been a death sentence for its inhabitants. They had no where else to go. The rest of the Enterprise was packed.

The Captain mentally winced as he recalled the staff meeting that followed Spock's announcement. McCoy practically hit him and even Scott and Sulu seemed absolutely amazed that the Vulcan would even consider emptying the area of its living cargo.

"But Mr. Spock," Sulu's voice had lost whatever small amount of inscrutability it had ever held. "Even the Klingons have been helping...I mean...it would be murder!"

"That is a non sequitor, Lt." The Science Officer had remained unruffled as usual. "The Klingons are offering assistance basically, we think, because this system is in close proximity to their empire and they find the entire situation to be of great propaganda value in their attempt to take over the Deira I confederacy. That is assuming there is anything to take over after all this. Also we have no reason to assume they are doing anything that seriously threatens the safety of their own ships. We, on the other hand, are."

After half an hour of increasingly bitter wrangling, Kirk had realized it was time to settle the matter. "You are probably correct, Mr. Spock. We should have kept that deck clear, but it's too late now. We'll just have to hope for the best."

But as so often happens, the best had decided not to make an appearance.

As the elevator slid to a jerky stop, the Captain abandoned the unpleasant memory to try and concentrate on a more immediate problem: what could his Vulcan friend be up to? He stepped out of the conveyance into a hallway that, if possible, was even more crowded than the others he had seen. The expression "wall-to-wall" people had been used in his hearing before, but he had never been in a situation where it

was so uncomfortably true. Sitting, standing, lying, shouting, sleeping, crying...the corridor was jammed with beings in far less than optimum condition. This group didn't seem to be quite as disheveled as some of the others on the Enterprise but they did not seem in a better frame of mind because of this fact. A number of them seemed to be complaining vociferously to no one in particular. Fighting an impulse to step back into the elevator and return to his relatively peaceful bridge, Kirk straightened his shoulders, marched into the center of the fray, and asked what was the problem.

Ten minutes later, as he left the protestors and continued on his journey to Spock's quarters, he knew. These were people who had been snatched from certain death at no small risk to his ship and crew and who were now angry because they couldn't have private cabins! He had almost offered to take them back to their dying planet if they didn't like their accommodations on the ship, but he had restrained himself. All he could do was promise that the situation would soon be improving, that seemed safe enough since if it didn't get better it could only get worse, in which case they would all be tiny bits of space debris and wouldn't be able to complain about his treatment of them at all. Several did inform him of their intentions of making a formal complaint when they reached Starbase 4.

"If we ever reach it..." Kirk muttered to himself as he finally negotiated the last few feet to chez Spock. "Next they'll be blaming me for the nova..." His voice trailed off as he got a look at what was happening within the cabin.

The door was partially ajar and through the opening left the human could see the spare figure of his First Officer and what for a wild moment seemed to be a flock of small yellow and orange birds. He blinked rapidly, fearing that the lack of rest had finally affected his mind. But the scene remained steady and as he walked into the room the situation became clearer. He had forgotten that the young of the Deiran natives had a colorful down-like covering until puberty. Spock was simply, if unexpectedly, surrounded by children.

"Well Mr. Spock, babysitting?" Kirk couldn't keep himself from grinning at the situation.

The Vulcan, looking a bit harrassed, turned at the sound of the familiar voice. "NO indeed, Captain, I am merely attempting to rectify an error." He paused temporarily while he removed a child, who seemed intent upon eating it, from his bed. "I had carelessly forgotten to turn down the temperature in here...which is inexcusable under the circumstances. I attempted to call a maintenance crewman to adjust it so that the space would be available for the use of the passengers, but no one would answer the call from the bridge. Presumably

they were all busy, although intership communication is not working properly, so it is possible my call never got through. However that could be fixed by..."

"Spock please, what are these children doing in here?" Kirk knew that if he didn't get his friend back to the subject at hand that he would receive a lecture on modern cross-circuiting procedures that, however interesting, could well wait.

"I am coming to that, sir."

Although he knew that it was impossible, Kirk thought the Vulcan sounded a bit miffed. He liked to tell things his own way.

"It seemed safe for me to leave the bridge for a short period of time to come here and reset the controls myself. Also it seemed a good opportunity to check into the condition of the ship and the new arrivals since I had not had the chance to do so for several hours. You were expected back on the bridge momentarily, therefore; I had no qualms about leaving Mr. Sulu in temporary charge. In case of emergency, Lt. Uhura did know where I was and..."

"Yes, that's all fine," Kirk interrupted hastily. "I'm sure you took care of all the details before you came down here. But what are you doing with these children?"

"I am endeavoring to explain, sir...Once I arrived here, and a difficult journey it was, I noticed that several of the Deiran young were clustered around the door of the cabin. Even though it was closed, some of the heat from in here had escaped. Suddenly I remembered that pre-adolescent children of that species require a temperature 23 degrees higher than the adults do for optimum comfort. Since most of them aboard the *Enterprise* are suffering from radiation and exposure, their need is all the greater. Therefore I simply opened the door and made arrangements for as many of the children as would fit in."

"Are you planning to take care of them personally?" Kirk couldn't keep the surprise from his voice. Spock was such a private person, his cabin had always been off limits to almost everyone. It was filled with the Vulcan's personal treasures, many of which, Kirk was sure, were irreplaceable. Yet he had turned his home over to a horde of small, noisy, emotional creatures who seemed mostly intent on breaking everything available and crying for their brood-mothers. Several were also molting all over the floor.

"NO indeed, several adults have volunteered to take care of the children. I shall be returning to my post momentarily."



Spock paused as if awaiting a comment from his superior officer.

Kirk could come up with no useful comment...his brain was definitely not working at peak efficiency. He just nodded rather weakly.

"Jim, you seem to be tired," the Vulcan continued. "As I shall be back on the bridge shortly, it would seem logical for you to obtain some rest at this time."

"I had planned to get some--in here. But that's out of the question now and everywhere else is full."

"That is not quite correct, sir."

Kirk blinked in surprise. Spock wasn't going to suggest using the bridge too, was he?

"I have ordered recreation room 3 cleared and blankets brought in. It was my intention that we use that area as a resting place for members of the crew who could endanger the ship by continuing to perform their duties in an exhausted state. I believe that you yourself would fit into that category, sir."

Trust Spock to think of everything and not to be shy about telling the truth, unpleasant though it might be. "I would like nothing better than to sleep for a week," Kirk admitted, "but I can't until we can go into warp..."

"...or abandon the transports," the Vulcan finished, bending down to disengage a particularly orange little female that was attempting to climb up his left leg.

"Yes, or abandon the transports. It looks like you were right the other day."

There was a moment of reflective silence as the two men lost themselves in their own thoughts. Fortunately for all concerned Vulcans do not share in the common human failing of saying "I told you so."

"Well, I'm going back to Engineering for a while. If we could only get those transporters working...See you on the bridge." Kirk turned to leave but was struck by the enormity of Spock's sacrifice, and turned back. "I'm really proud of you. I know you were against much of this operation and for you to give up your cabin like this..."

Spock raised both eyebrows. "Captain I was not against the evacuation effort per se. I merely noted that some of the methods used showed a lamentable lack of foresight on the

part of our own people. And as for my cabin...the use of it in these circumstances is only logical. Lives are far more important, obviously, than material possessions or my privacy. Once these beings were on the Enterprise I could do nothing less than to aid them in every way possible."

Kirk felt slightly rebuked somehow, but it didn't especially bother him. Spock's strong point was not, and never would be, taking praise gracefully. "Yes, of course, it's all very logical. I should have expected nothing less." He turned away again and headed for the turbo lift.

The human knew that it was a small thing to be so pleased about but the scene in the Vulcan's cabin had cheered him immeasurably. He was sure that another Vulcan could have found it equally as logical to keep the children out in the cold.

As he trod around sleeping bodies he was suddenly reminded of the favorite saying of an elderly neighbor in his childhood home town. Long years before she had often said, "There isn't enough dark in all the world to hide the light of one small candle." Right until this moment he had never really understood what she had meant. His small world was still full of dark, but the light he had seen in Spock's cabin had truly shone.

A wall intercom beeped for his attention and he managed to reach it without seriously stepping on anyone. "Kirk here."

Scott's voice answered, weakened by static but obviously happy. "Captain, we have 'em working! We can have those people aboard in ten minutes."

Kirk slumped against the wall in relief. "Great! the second the last one beams aboard cut the tractor beams and get us out of here fast. I don't care where...just away from that damn star."

"Aye Captain...but where are we to put them...you know how crowded everything is already?"

Kirk thought desperately for a moment. Somehow that little detail had managed to slip everyone's attention. "Well...has anyone thought to have the swimming pool drained? It would hold a goodly number of them. It only has to be for a short time, you know. Once we figure out exactly where we are we ought to be at Starbase 4 in less than eleven hours."

"Now that you mention it, sir I don't think anyone remembered the pool. I'll have someone attend to it immediately. Oh and one other thing...One of the transports has 500 kilos of food concentrate on it. That would be enough to keep the Deirans for several days."

"That's even better. Do what you can, Kirk out." He was stunned...so much good news so fast was unsettling. He pondered for a moment while he absently watched a group of Deirans waddle down the corridor in the direction of Spock's cabin. For his friend's sake he hoped the adults, who bore a weird resemblance to a group of five feet tall turkeys with magenta fur, were the babysitters he was awaiting.

Once more he punched an intercom button. "Kirk to bridge."

"Uhura here."

"Do we have subspace communications yet?"

"No sir, but the interference is beginning to clear."

"Well tell navigation to give us warp eight as soon as the last of the refugees are aboard. Take us anywhere... we'll figure out our exact position later...just tell them not to hit anything."

"Yes sir," Uhura's voice held an undercurrent of amusement. "Where will you be sir?"

"I'm coming up to the bridge...no wait." Spock could take care of things for a while now that the worst of the emergency was over. "I'll be in rec room 3 for awhile if anybody needs me."

Kirk straightened up and resumed his oft interrupted trip to the elevator. Conditions were still far from ideal, but he was sure that after a few hours sleep he could deal with everything much more efficiently. In his mind's eye he could still see Spock and the young ones and he smiled... the dark was lifting.

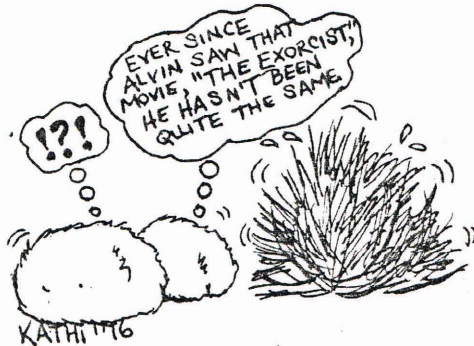
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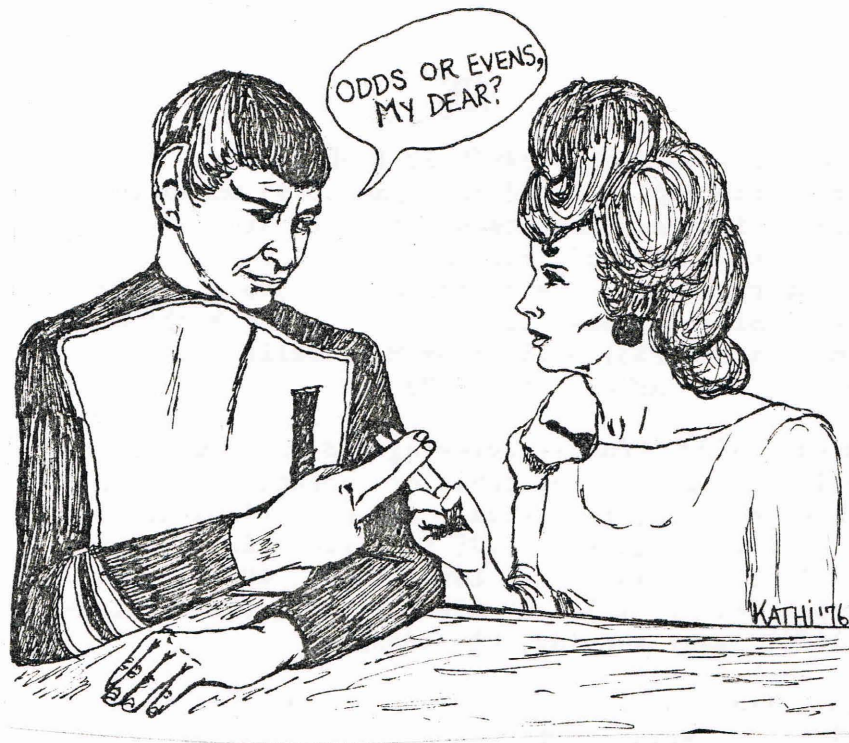
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A new Star Trek fanzine, *Galactic Discourse*, is in need of fan fiction. Write to Laurie Huff, 605 Maple Place, Normal, IL 61761.

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Editor's Note:

Several of the grocery/minimart/whatever chains in the area have been offering series of glasses to be collected by folk who buy their soft drinks or other goodies. One such, which makes a confection called "Slurpee", has, in the recent past, offered glasses featuring "endangered species", "football heroes", "western stars" and "pop/rock stars" (the current promotion). Paula Block suggests that the next collectors' item be a series of Star Trek glasses, featuring a picture of each star and a short description or statement by that character. On the next page, then, is her modest contribution to this worthy cause.

(Paula is obviously too far gone to be helped, and we expect that she will be put away by the authorities soon....)



STAR TREK Slurpee Cup #17: Miranda Jones, "Is There in Truth No Beauty":

"Hello, I'm blind. I used to be Bitter and Filled with Envy, but since I've made it with the Medusans I can really see the Light! It was mind-expanding! A word to the wise -- always wear your safety visor on the job, and keep a stiff upper chin."



Art
Suzanne